

‘The Habits of Good Society’: Victorian Manners and Etiquette Writing, 1834 –1890s

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COVID – 19 NOTICE

Though a pandemic presents a rich subject for the historian to study decades after the fact, historical research *during* a pandemic has many challenges. The main body of this thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic and carries traces of its impact. Due to its unforeseeable nature and effects, the pandemic made archival research at points impossible, and access to secondary sources was extremely restricted. This has influenced the scope of the project, forcing me to make cuts and omissions to the planned outline of the following chapters. ‘Chapter V: The Spatial Dimensions of Etiquette’, for example, should not only have included a discussion of domestic manners, but also of those abroad, specifically in America and the colonies. While this is a shame, I do hope to undertake this research when turning this thesis into a monograph.

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Etiquette manuals were a distinctive form of guidance literature, first published in the mid-1830s, providing instruction, in a compact format, on manners and how to behave in society. In the following decades up until the turn of the century, new pocket guides that advised readers how to eat, dress, greet, and most importantly, *succeed* in a social setting, appeared by the hundreds. This thesis's main concern is to delve more deeply into this neglected body of material and challenge a series of standard conceptions of the genre, exploring its forms, authors (where known) and its discourse, as enabling as it was restricting about social interaction and social aspiration.

The texts themselves play a significant role as sources: preface, form and syntax provide valuable information about readers and writers to be deduced. References to etiquette writings in fiction, newspapers, periodicals, advertisements of the time are equally valuable in gauging the reception and perception of etiquette works. Through these materials, I explore how expectations of conduct operated in relation to constructions of gender, age, and class, and the ambitions for (and anxieties about) social change and social mobility, that preoccupied the authors, readers and publishers of etiquette manuals. In this way, the project will not only shed light on the etiquette genre itself, but also expose its wider implications. Etiquette literature has the potential to tell us a good deal about how social mobility was understood by a significant portion of Victorian society, and also illuminates in more detail both the contemporary management of social fluidity and how individuals tried to navigate a social system in flux.

LONG ABSTRACT

Etiquette manuals were a distinctive form of guidance literature that provided instruction on manners and how to behave in society in a compact format – of which the first clear example was published in 1834, three years before Victoria ascended the throne. In the following years and decades up until the early 1900s, new pocket guides that advised readers how to eat, dress, greet, and most importantly, *succeed* (a term that my thesis will explore and define) in a social setting, appeared by the hundreds. The sheer number combined with the numerous editions some manuals went through speaks for the popularity of the genre at the time, but also begs many questions. Why did etiquette literature emerge at this point in time and why did it take this form that was so distinctively different from the parental guides and conduct literature in the eighteenth century?

Though etiquette had international influences and origins, Victorians interpreted etiquette and its rules in their own way independent of their European neighbours, which is why this study focuses on nineteenth-century England, with an occasional glance across the Atlantic Ocean. The temporal scope of this project reflects the main publication period of etiquette manuals. Within the approximately 60-year-period considered the content of etiquette manuals barely evolved. A manual from 1845 could therefore be found proclaiming an almost identical set of rules as a manual published in 1885, seemingly oblivious to the cultural changes occurring in the meantime.

My project's main concern is to delve more deeply into this neglected body of material and challenge a series of standard conceptions of the genre (such as its reputation for being a genre designed to make money without much depth), exploring its forms, authors (where known) and the kinds of narrative etiquette writing enables or inhibits about social interaction and social aspiration. I explore how expectations of conduct operated in relation to constructions of gender,

age, and class, and the ambitions for (and anxieties about) social change and social mobility, that preoccupied the authors, readers and publishers of etiquette manuals.

The thesis is divided into two broad sections, the first focusing on a close reading of the sources, exploring format, language and the concept of etiquette, revealing how etiquette manuals answered the particular social needs of the 1830s and 1840s. The second section then explores etiquette in a broader context, more specifically, how etiquette as a genre reinforced gender norms and the politics of space. The first chapter begins with the creation of etiquette literature, analysing the rapidly evolving book market, as well as authors and readers of etiquette manuals. The second chapter traces the cultural and socio-economic factors against which etiquette literature was set, and how developments in, for example, sociability or politeness shaped etiquette manuals' contents and tone. The third chapter focuses more narrowly on the etiquette manuals themselves, their format and materiality, their linguistic construction and how (or how far) they marketed themselves as recipes for social success. The second section of the thesis then begins by examining etiquette in relation to gender. Chapter IV investigates the question of why (and if) writing on behaviour became a female preserve in the nineteenth century and how far etiquette writings influenced perceptions of femininity. The final chapter then explores etiquette in relation to location and space with regard to variations between manners in public and the private, the rural and the urban, as well as the continental and the domestic, trying to ascertain how far Victorians amended their behaviour in accordance with space.

Previous scholarship has barely touched upon the questions I set out to answer in these chapters. In fact, very few scholars have studied etiquette manuals closely at all. While a scholarly interest in their social-historical significance emerged in the late 1980s, the studies produced were often limited in terms of scope (studies either focused too narrowly on etiquette manuals, disregarding their wider implications or, on the other hand, using them to prove certain arguments) as well as in the research resources available to their writers. New research is needed, making use of previously unsourced print records and archived manuscript material, in order to better

understand the genre itself and to illuminate the relationship between the market in manners and the social history of etiquette. My study builds on existing studies of etiquette such as Michael Curtin's *Propriety and Position* (1987), to this day the only monograph entirely devoted to those manuals, and Leonore Davidoff's *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (1986). While these works have laid groundwork in the cultural understanding of etiquette, Curtin's study particularly does not explore the wider implications of social change which etiquette literature represented and focuses perhaps too narrowly on the primary materials itself. As Leonore Davidoff writes in her preface, *The Best Circles* very much 'provides a framework for more detailed investigation' – her short work raises many important questions such as 'why were there so few alternatives [to etiquette] available?'.¹ Most of these questions Davidoff lacks the space or the sources to explore further; my thesis, by contrast, researched and addresses them, to, I hope, a more satisfying extent.

In addition to genre-specific scholarship, other, more recent work by scholars including James Raven, Andrew Miles and Amanda Vickery have helped to place etiquette writings in the context of the fast-paced book market, social mobility, and changing forms of sociability. But I challenge concerns brought forward by historians such as Jay Mechling in 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers', where it is argued that advice manuals do not tell us anything about the actual behaviour in a given time.² While this point might have some justification, I demonstrate that attention to form, content and language of advice literature can nevertheless be suggestive of contemporary readerships and their values. With this in mind, I have developed a critical study of Victorian etiquette which builds on different strands of scholarship: book history, literary criticism, cultural history, and social mobility.

In order to achieve these research aims, I amassed and used a corpus of etiquette writing, which incorporates around one hundred etiquette works published between 1834 and 1900 and

¹ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 13, p. 14.

² See: J. Mechling, 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers', *Journal of Social History*, 9.1 (1975), 44–63 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/9.1.44>>.

which notes their particularities. Publishers' archives (as well as archives holding collections of diaries or letters describing etiquette), helped me gain additional information about sales numbers, advertising, author- and readership.³ The texts themselves play a significant role as sources: preface, form and syntax provide valuable information about readers and writers to be deduced. Mention of etiquette writings in fiction, newspapers, periodicals, advertisements of the time are equally valuable in gauging the reception and perception of etiquette works.

The study not only sheds light on the etiquette genre itself, but also exposes the wider implications of the genre. Etiquette literature has the potential to tell us more about readers' emotions regarding the potential of being socially mobile, as etiquette writers clearly played on the fears and hopes of readers to sell manuals. The genre can also illuminate how contemporaries managed social fluidity and how individuals tried to navigate a social system in flux. One of my hypotheses (derived from contemporary criticism in periodicals as well as the manuals themselves) is that one of the main target audiences of etiquette writers were the lower middle classes, for whom social success was vital to not move down the social ladder and become working class. Shedding new light on this group, underrepresented in scholarship, is one of the many ways in which my thesis will illuminate the social and cultural history of nineteenth-century England.

³ Publisher's archives consulted for example were: Routledge Archive, University College London (held at the National Archives), Frederick Warne Archive, University of Reading. Other archives consulted for diaries and letters for example were: Carlisle Archive Centre, Winchester Archive, Cumbria Archive Centre, Gloucester Archive, Aylesbury Archive, National Archives.

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INTRODUCTION

Manners, Etiquette, and the Victorians

‘Never rest both elbows on the table’; ‘In eating fish, have your silver fork in your right hand, and a piece of bread in your left’; ‘You should not offer a gloved hand to a lady or a superior who is ungloved’.⁴ These are but few of the many rules nineteenth-century advice manuals implored their readers to follow. From the mid-1830s until the turn of the century, guides appeared by the hundreds on the literary market, all describing a behavioural concept they called ‘etiquette’. This complex system of rules followed the ‘usages of the (so termed) “best society”’ and instructed readers on how to eat, greet, meet and generally, how to become part of this ‘best society’.⁵ Directed at readers who wished to better themselves socially, etiquette manuals constituted a form of literature as aspirational as it was cynically calculating: omitting any moral or spiritual concerns, etiquette writers simply prescribed how to appear favourably to others without suffering the embarrassment of being identified as a social interloper. In theory, nearly all men and women could now choose to participate in polite society and, in one etiquette writer’s words, learn to

⁴ Mentor, *Never: A Hand-Book for the Uninitiated and Inexperienced Aspirants to Refined Society’s Giddy Heights and Glittering Attainments* (London, 1884), p. 45; *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 20; *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., 1857), p. 77.

⁵ Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society. Revised by a Lady of Rank*, 19th edition (London, 1839), p. iii.

‘become accomplished’ in its codes.⁶ The reality was, of course, far more complicated than etiquette guides allowed their readers to see.

In the 1830s, for the first time in its history, conduct literature, in the novel shape of the etiquette manual, became accessible to a wide audience. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, by contrast, treatises on conduct were directed at instruction for those participating in life at court: they spoke primarily to nobles and courtiers, and were a luxury item, only affordable (in the main) by this elite.⁷ The most important English example of this is Thomas Hoby’s 1561 translation of Castiglione’s *Il cortegiano* – *The Book of the Courtier*. Mary Partridge describes the original, with its concentration upon advising those born into such circles about acceptable manners and morals, as ‘one of the most celebrated books’ of its age. Other local work followed – such as Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622).⁸ The eighteenth century opened the discourse of manners to a slightly wider demographic – addressing middle-class men and women and often maintaining that the advice proffered was applicable to all ranks. Yet due to the high price of books, and the implicit address to an educated audience (allusions to classical philosophy were common), conduct literature effectively still had a relatively narrow cultural remit. Expressly including conduct books within his investigations, James Raven says that ‘the literature considered in this study [until the beginning of the 19th century] was written and published principally for the middle classes.’ He points out that the ‘middling sort’ covered a vast range of incomes and positions in society, from those, although educated, often on no more than a labourer’s wage (£20 a year or so) up to shopkeepers perhaps bringing in fifty times that amount. But he estimates that

⁶ *Etiquette for Gentlemen with Hints on the Art of Conversation*, 2nd Edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1838), p. 4.

⁷ Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸ Mary Partridge, ‘Thomas Hoby’s English Translation of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*’, *Historical Journal*, 50, 4 (2007), p. 773; Dinah Birch (ed.), *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, seventh edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, ‘Courtesy Literature’; John E. Mason, *Gentlefolk in the Making: Studies in the History of English Courtesy Literature and Related Topics from 1531 to 1774*, Pennsylvania University Press, Philadelphia 1935, chapter 1.

an income at least double the lowest ‘middling’ income may have been the absolute minimum to consider buying published works. Jan Fergus notes in her study of provincial readership in this period that purchasers of ‘women’s novels, men’s plays, fiction, and books in general, belonged primarily to the gentry and professional classes... perhaps some other tradeswomen and tradesmen... [and a] few buyers drawn from... lower ranks’.⁹

As discussed in detail in Chapter One, the audience expanded again into the nineteenth century. There were advances in the book market and cheaper methods of production, which meant that booksellers could experiment with materials, formats, and content. Conduct literature morphed into small, readily portable etiquette manuals. These were more simply written, and more affordable for those with a regular income. The major growth in the market for such works occurred firmly within a quickly growing middle class but could now also include at least some in its lower reaches and from the overlapping economic layer at the very top of the skilled working class. It was the need amongst those who could now afford such instruction to distinguish themselves from those who could not which was a major driver of the appeal of the books. Not only did these manuals offer to simplify a complex system for behaviour for new entrants to polite society, but they were, at least in theory, accessible to any literate reader (or listener) interested in self-improvement, social climbing (or maintenance), and/or simply wanting a glance behind the closed doors of those associated with the fashionable ‘ton’.

The appearance of a plethora of etiquette guides on the literary market in the 1830s and the persistence of a particular publishing format over the following sixty years reflects a society in

⁹ The most popular conduct books were undeniably out of the price range of manual workers in this period: Hester Chapone’s *Letters* cost 6s, Dr Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* or Gisborne’s *An Inquiry into the Duties of Men* each sold for 14s. In: Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), p. 15. James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 57-8; Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007), p. 97.

flux, at once ambitious and wary of societal changes and shifts in the existing social hierarchy. The expansion of the middle classes, industrialisation, anxieties and hopes around social mobility, and changing gender roles are some of the many issues which troubled nineteenth-century citizens and are reflected in the discourse of etiquette itself or its subtexts. Additionally, new forms of socialisation and the privatisation of much social intercourse led to the formation of complex mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion which operated more and more, as Amanda Vickery put it, 'behind closed doors'.¹⁰ Invitations and introductions became key points of control over genteel contact. In theory at least, etiquette manuals promised the not-securely-eligible reader a way in.

Reading between the lines of etiquette guides, it quickly becomes apparent that while authors overtly encouraged *assimilation* of upper-class manners and mores, they discouraged *integration* into the upper classes. Their double-edged nature was as restrictive as it was enabling. To put it simply, any reader in need of guidance was, by definition, a reader who did not belong to the fashionable society aspired to. By appealing with modifications of address to the two sexes, to readers at different points on the class 'scale', and even to readers from different regions of the country, etiquette literature and its consumption provide, by extension, a lens through which to perceive the social values of aspirational culture, ideological prescriptions on gender, and the cultural pressures arising from democratisation and modernisation.

This study does not seek to re-establish the facts of social mobility and its limits—already shown by others (as discussed above) to be key facets of how British society evolved from the first to last quarters of the 19th century. Instead, as the title of the thesis suggests, it aims to show how etiquette and etiquette literature fitted into, reflected, and pushed back against, the changing social conditions and attitudes of the Victorian period. This study also, in its initial parts, provides an interrogation of the publishing history and evidenced social uses of etiquette manuals, engaging

¹⁰ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

with the question of whether they were descriptive or prescriptive, tracking down rare but important evidence of their authorship, and using formal and rhetorical analysis to judge how they furthered the aims of their writers with respect to particular segments of society.

Setting the Scene for Etiquette

When etiquette manuals appeared in the 1830s, they entered a market for books that had experienced significant social, political, cultural, and economic changes over the past half century – changes which informed their form and content and help to explain the quick and long-lasting popularity of the new advice genre/format. ‘Manners’, ‘Politeness’, ‘Respectability’, ‘Class’, ‘Masculinity’, ‘Femininity’, ‘Public’ and ‘Private’ are all keywords of this study, not historical constants but ideals subject to more or less prescriptive interpretation and undergoing modification and change in the period between 1750 and 1830. Delineating the most important and relevant developments from the late eighteenth up until the mid-nineteenth century provides the historical and historiographical starting point for the following chapters.

In 1796, the writer and philosopher Edmund Burke was moved to proclaim:

Manners are of more importance than laws [...] The Law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and color to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them.¹¹

¹¹ Edmund Burke, *Regicide Peace*, Letter I (London: 1796). Quoted in: *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 76.

Burke's dictum designates a preoccupation with manners that goes beyond simplistic table manners to permeate society like 'air we breathe'. He captures eloquently the dual nature of manners: 'good' or 'bad', 'high' or 'low', having the power as social signifiers to indicate the moral 'quality' of a person. A neutral definition of manners would be 'the way a person is meant to act in a social framework', but any deeper glossing of what 'good manners' consist of can only ever be given with reference to a specific point in time.

In the eighteenth century, good manners were closely linked to the concept of 'politeness', a framework of idealised and prescriptive conduct, in part guided by Christian values.¹² In the words of the conduct writer Reverend John Bennet, politeness was not only the 'most amiable quality' one could possess, but an art form to be mastered: 'the art of being easy ourselves, in company and of making all others easy about us'.¹³ Another conduct writer, Hester Chapone, similarly described politeness in her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) as 'a delightful qualification': in order to be considered 'perfectly polite' one had, she advised, to retain 'great presence of mind, with a delicate and quick sense of propriety'.¹⁴ Politeness, then, not unlike etiquette, required a certain degree of artifice: the concept encapsulated an 'idealized vision of human intercourse [...] situated wherever gentlemanly (or lady-like) society existed'.¹⁵

Influential work on politeness by Lawrence Klein has in recent decades given greater depth to our understanding of how politeness 'altered the landscape of discourse in early eighteenth-century England'.¹⁶ Having originated from the courtly traditions, politeness came to function, as

¹² For an extensive study tracing the emergence of politeness and its application in society, see also: Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*, Women and Men in History (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Education, 2001).

¹³ Revd John Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady on Useful and Interesting Subjects Calculated to Improve the Heart, to Form the Manners, and Enlighten the Understanding*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1789), II, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (London, 1820), Letter eight, p. 144.

¹⁵ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal*, 32.3 (1989), pp. 583-605 (p. 587).

<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00012437>>.

¹⁶ See for example: Lawrence Eliot Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY:

Klein argues, as a ‘cultural ideology’ for the elite, being ‘associated with, and often identified with gentlemanliness’, allowing applicants to establish their authority.¹⁷ Michèle Cohen echoes Klein’s account, arguing that it was the ‘polite gestures and demeanour that define[d] the gentleman: how to come into a room full of company with a graceful and proper assurance and without embarrassment, how to eat, how to not be encumbered by one’s body’.¹⁸ Cohen fittingly calls politeness ‘the currency in the commerce for sociability’.¹⁹

Yet, as John Tosh notes, the concept of politeness had an ‘increasing irrelevance’ in the Victorian period, amidst anxieties around gender and foppery and a move away from a focus upon the leisured gentleman to the aspirational middle-class.²⁰ Instead, ‘good behaviour’ became again newly defined in print.²¹ As Michael Curtin notes, there was a division in guidance literature around the turn of the century, in which ‘manners contracted to etiquette [and] morals aspired to religious principle’.²² Indeed, conduct literature continued its religious and moral orientation in the works of writers such as Thomas Gisborne, Hannah More and many mid to late Victorian writers, most notably, Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis.²³ These works more broadly dealt with questions surrounding morality, the purposes and duties of members of society and how Christian precepts were to be incorporated into day-to-day life. Etiquette literature, by contrast, dealt with the more superficial

Cambridge University Press, 1994); and *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850*, ed. by Lawrence Eliot Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1998).

¹⁷ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869–98 (p. 871)

<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X02002716>>.

¹⁸ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 45.

¹⁹ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, pp. 47–48.

²⁰ John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p. 462 and *passim*.

²¹ For an extensive discussion on the abandonment of politeness, see: Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

²² Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, *Modern European History* (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 4.

²³ See also: ‘The Literature of Conduct, the Conduct of Literature, and the Politics of Desire: An Introduction’, In: Armstrong, Nancy; Tennenhouse, Leonard (eds.), *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*.

aspects of behaviour, the manners or codes one needed to deploy in social intercourse and in specific circumstances such as visits, introductions, dinners, or balls.

Adherence to both politeness and, more narrowly, etiquette served the wider goal of establishing the respectability of the person applying and adhering to their precepts.²⁴ The main difference was that while politeness was reserved for a more elite discourse and circumstance, etiquette could be, in theory and at least in part, practised by everyone and anyone. What becomes apparent through historical and historiographical descriptions of ‘politeness’ are its strong links to class and to education. A marker of propriety and of class distinction, it required a degree of refinement in its interpretation, so that the bar for imitation by (for example) a socially ambitious merchant family, was, implicitly, always high.²⁵ Etiquette, on the other hand, was from the outset a commercialised commodity, deliberately reductive in its identification of rules to be acquired, and readily available at low cost in the form of a portable manual which invited its purchaser to put theory into practice.

This picture of a new market for simplified social rules links closely to changing landscapes of class, and thus for the market in books, at the same time. Davidoff and Hall have shown in *Family Fortunes* how the period between 1780 and 1850 saw a reconfiguration, reinvention, and new formation of a middle class eager to distinguish itself from those above and below by staking claims to moral authority.²⁶ The same time frame, as David Cannadine argues in *Aspects of Aristocracy*, was a ‘crucial period of renewal, re-creation and re-invention’ for ‘not only a remarkable

²⁴ Janet Roebuck comprehensively defines ‘respectability’ as: ‘social acceptance by people one respected, the possession of good manners, ownership of the trappings of comfort, conformity to accepted social norms, regular attendance at an acceptable church, avoidance of public participation in proscribed activities and, if possible, good breeding’ in: Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, Development of English Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 19.

²⁵ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869–98 (p. 888)

<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X02002716>> [accessed on the 2nd of May 2022].

²⁶ See: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

series of changes in the English aristocracy, but also witnessed the creation of a truly British titled and territorial class'.²⁷ On the whole, the power dynamics between the middle and upper echelons of society were being renegotiated. The shift from conduct literature for the elite to etiquette manuals for the masses forms part of a much larger power struggle for cultural commodities, and for reconfiguration of who could count as respectable and, by extension, participate in good society.

The period between 1780 and 1840 has long been closely linked with the term 'the rise of the middle classes' in historical scholarship. In theory, this refers to a consolidation of a more distinct 'middle class', defined broadly speaking by their holding property and non-manual labour. Yet defining and describing the vast middle section of the social order in this rather narrow way has been cause for critique from historians, citing the imprecision and generality of the term.²⁸ More formal economic categories were nevertheless being created, as John Seed notes. In his attempt at a comprehensive definition, the middle class could henceforth more comprehensively be described as having:

its constituent elements were distinguished from the landed aristocracy and gentry by their need to generate an income from some kind of active occupation(s). And they were distinguished from the labouring majority by their possession of property - whether mobile capital, stock in trade or professional credentials - and by their exemption from manual labour. Their economic activity thus involved the possession and management of material resources and the labour of others.²⁹

Mental – including 'intellectual' – labour was a key characteristic here, with manual labour featuring neither at work nor in the home, the latter of which primarily extended to the female. To Seed's description, Catherine Hall adds the employment of at least one servant in order to be considered

²⁷ David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 10.

²⁸ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 4.

²⁹ John Seed, 'From "Middling Sort" to Middle Class in the Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England', in *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification*, ed. by M. L. Bush (London ; New York: Longman, 1992), p. 115.

middle class, ensuring that one would not be considered ‘ungenteel’ by forcing the lady of the house to be obviously manually or economically active in the home or household business.³⁰

Diana Coole has argued that the ‘stubborn economic division’ is what demarcated class, leaving little relevance to cultural matters; class therefore, according to Coole, was to be understood as relational and not structured like language.³¹ Other historians, however, have made strong cases for language of class itself had come to the fore in that period as a category of social organisation. The ‘middling sort’ of the eighteenth century became in the nineteenth century a ‘middle class’. Definitions and distinctions between individual socioeconomic groups and classes grew sharper. As Gareth Stedman Jones says specifically of the metropolis, ‘in the period 1790-1840, the distance between the London middle class and those beneath them increased dramatically... From the end of the 1820s, more and more of the middle class abandoned the city and the industrial quarters for the exclusiveness of the suburbs’, then, most pertinently, ‘how... did these new aspirants to gentility regard the “unwashed” proletarians crammed together in the smoky regions which they had left behind? In times of prosperity and stability, they probably thought little about them at all, since their major concern was to create a lifestyle as far as possible removed from them’.³²

After the ‘linguistic turn’ in historical scholarship which established itself in the early 1990s, scholars such as Simon Gunn and Dror Wahrman started to pay greater emphasis to discourse as social construct, as important as the ‘objective reality’ of social institutions and relations.³³ Gunn

³⁰ Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, Reprinted (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 187.

³¹ Diana Coole, ‘Is Class a Difference that Makes a Difference?’ in: *Radical Philosophy* (1996), pp. 17-25 (p. 18).

³² Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer, 1974), pp. 464-6.

³³ See: Simon Gunn, ‘The Public Sphere, Modernity and Consumption: New Perspectives on the English Middle Class’, in *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, ed. by David Nicholls and Alan Kidd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester (GB): Manchester university press, 2000); and Dror

for example argues that ‘culture itself was a crucial domain for the articulation of class in the nineteenth-century industrial city, through a series of oppositions between “high” and “low”, the cultured and the culture-less, mental and manual labour’, a picture in which etiquette manuals, with their mechanisms of distinction between good and bad behaviour, fit quite neatly.³⁴ Gunn argues that it was not primarily industrialisation or urbanisation which pushed its formation but rather the ‘more immediate significance of [...] developments in the sphere of politics, religion and morality’.³⁵ The Reform Act of 1832 further institutionalised the split between the working and middle class, giving the right to vote to those propertied only. In his study *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840*, Wahrman in fact sees the 1832 Reform Bill playing a key role; ‘not the endpoint of a long social transformation, the inevitable reality of which was finally acknowledged by the political system’, as had been previously been argued in the historical scholarship, ‘but rather in itself an important catalyst in the decisive transformation of people’s conceptualizations of their society’.³⁶ While this political development forced a clearer demarcation surrounding a social and political middle, the idea of class was neither secure nor fixed. As Gunn notes elsewhere, ‘the middle class was a fragile formation, marked by distinctions of wealth, religious identity and political affiliation and subject to the constant pressures of economic competition’.³⁷ This fragility and pressure – and the fear of decline, alongside the desire for advancement – are important factors in understanding the appeal of the works considered in this study.

Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁴ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 4. Gareth Stedman Jones has similarly disseminated the language of class, albeit in a working-class context, arguing for a more flexible and permeable definition of classes, and not large or rigid divisions. See: Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁵ Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Cassell, 2002), p. 18.

³⁶ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 17-18.

³⁷ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester (GB): Manchester university press, 2000), p. 24.

There were also changes for those further up the social scale. In his study of the Victorian aristocracy, Cannadine notes an unprecedented ‘extension, diversification, and codification of the peerage’.³⁸ Whereas only two new titles were on average created per year between 1700 and 1775, in the fifty-five-year period between 1776 and 1830, 209 peerages were added, and the House of Lords increased from 199 members to 358.³⁹ The result was a ‘consolidation of the nation’s top personnel into a new British upper class, with a heightened sense of privilege and extended sense of identity’.⁴⁰ Cultural norms and, in particular, ways of conducting one’s social leisure activities were methods to ‘set [these] elites apart and acted as grounds on which they enacted social closure’.⁴¹ Etiquette manuals in part serve as documentation of the prescriptive ideals of sociability practice in and/or ascribed to the aristocracy, and—in this new publishing format—expressly pedalled to readers further down the social scale, as a way of helping them to keep closer to those above them than to those below.

Although, as Mark Girouard has argued, ‘upper class values were varied; they [could] not be fitted into a drawer labelled “upper class only”, as distinct from middle- or lower-class values’.⁴² Etiquette manuals sought to portray a comprehensive and consistent set of values understood to be distinctively upper class or (a less clear category of social elevation) ‘fashionable’. Etiquette manuals led readers to believe that imitation of these supposed upper-class behavioural and social patterns would grant readers on lower social scales access to (their) society. While *assimilation* was indeed encouraged in the manuals, *integration* (as already noted) was not, and etiquette authors between the lines assumed that the social hierarchy would (and, normally, should) be kept intact.

³⁸ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, p. 29.

³⁹ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, p. 33.

⁴¹ Sam Friedman and Aaron Reeves, ‘From Aristocratic to Ordinary: Shifting Modes of Elite Distinction’, *American Sociological Review*, 2020, Vol. 85(2), p. 340.

⁴² Mark Girouard, ‘Victorian Values and the Upper Classes’, in *Victorian Values: A Joint Symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, December 1990*, ed. by T. C. Smout, Royal Society of Edinburgh, and British Academy, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 78 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1992), pp. 49–60 (p. 49).

Amid the broad social changes already discussed, perceptions of gender played a significant role in refining ideas of the middle class. The evangelical revival in the late eighteenth century was one of the driving forces in this development, which not only envisioned a turn ‘inward’ to the self, and to the home, but by extension contributed to sparking a reconfiguration of the parameters of gender, and a refinement of ideas surrounding masculinity and femininity, in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁴³ The revival assisted the articulation of a set of ‘domestic’ values and virtues which (in blunt summation) prescribed a strong patriarchal figure and a submissive female.

Michèle Cohen, Philip Carter, and John Tosh are among the many historians who have described the reconfiguration of masculinity in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early parts of the next.⁴⁴ The evolution of ideals of masculinity was closely linked, Cohen argues, to anxieties about the feminising tendencies of refinement. In her words: ‘Refinement should only go so far or it would become effeminacy’.⁴⁵ Cohen furthermore adds that male politeness was overlaid by an updated version of medieval chivalry at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as politeness itself became increasingly feminised.⁴⁶ Victorian manliness, by contrast, was according to Tosh now ‘premised on a powerful sense of the feminine ‘other’, with each sex being defined by negative stereotypes of the other’.⁴⁷ Slowly evolving was a form of ideological manliness that was comprised of soberness, earnestness, respectability, and hard work – a sharp contrast to the

⁴³ See in particular: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁴ See for example: Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996); Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*, Women and Men in History (Harlow, England ; New York: Pearson Education, 2001); and John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, 1. publ. in paperback, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830”, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44.No. 2 (April 2005), pp. 312–29 (p. 315–6).

⁴⁷ John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 455–72 (p. 464), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440102000191>>.

stereotypical uninhibited, sexually licentious Georgian libertine. Tosh's observation that 'politeness is not a quality that we readily associate with Victorian men' may say as much about our expectations of the period as about its own priorities, but it does at least mark a significant 'remixing' of concepts of politeness with adjacent but differently nuanced concepts, operative in different social situations: respectability, decency, taste, command of etiquette.⁴⁸

Etiquette similarly provided a framework for women to act in accordance with the newfound ideologies surrounding femininity, which in part found consolidation through etiquette manuals. Barbara Thaden summarises 'the idealized middle-class mother's function' as 'providing for the health, happiness, and peace of all family members, while appearing to have no needs of her own'.⁴⁹ The ideal, Thaden notes, was not entirely new: 'Philosophers, doctors, political pamphleteers, and authors of moral, religious, and general advice manuals had been barraging women with propaganda urging them to stay home and take care of their children since the beginning of the eighteenth century'.⁵⁰ But with the turn of the century came a clearer and more consistent codification of behavioural expectations when mixing socially, a codification that was reflected widely in prescriptive literature for women. Elizabeth Langland here notes how the 'focus on women rather than men' was 'implicitly acknowledging that the evolving signifiers of bourgeois identity properly belong to women'.⁵¹ Men's function was grounded in providing economically for the family, which enabled women to pursue their calling of homemakers, caretakers, guiding, by extension, the whole of society.

This onus on women to understand and enact implicit social codes of respectability was echoed in conduct literature and etiquette literature alike. They differ, however, in terms of their

⁴⁸ Tosh, 'Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England', p. 455.

⁴⁹ Barbara Thaden, *The Maternal Voice in Victorian Fiction: Rewriting the Patriarchal Family*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities; Literature and Society in Victorian Britain, v. 2053. v. 2 (New York: Garland Pub, 1997), p. 51.

⁵⁰ Thaden, *The Maternal Voice in Victorian Fiction*, p. 6.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Reading Women Writing (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 25.

attention to morality and/or virtue – concerns that are, strikingly, almost entirely absent from etiquette advice-giving. Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis⁵², for example claimed in her famous conduct book *The Women of England* (1839): ‘it is the domestic character of England—the home comforts, and fireside virtues for which she is so justly celebrated’, where they are to reign in a ‘gentle, inoffensive, delicate, and passively amiable’ way.⁵³ This new ‘domestic woman’, Ellis adds, who is ‘moving in a comparatively limited circle’, is an abrupt departure from the women of the previous century, who ‘were accustomed to the constant employment of their hands [...] in household avocations, now fallen into disuse from their incompatibility with modern refinement’.⁵⁴ Etiquette literature so far overlapped with conduct literature that many of its authors similarly advocated for a leisured female ideal. However, the moral aspect of being a wife and mother that Ellis praises, her ability to provide spiritual comfort to husband and children, was almost entirely absent from the discourse of etiquette. Through the codification of idealised female behaviour, etiquette manuals sought to create, in Leonore Davidoff words, ‘specialised personnel [...] to maintain the fabric of Society’.⁵⁵ This included maintaining its borders, practising a complex system of exclusion and inclusion, making sure that only those respectable enough gained access to the home, the family, and, by extension ‘Society’.

The social structure of the family had undergone significant restructuring in the last stages of the eighteenth century. Whereas in the eighteenth century, families could, as Naomi Tadmor notes, ‘comprise related and non-related dependants living under the authority of a householder, and might include a spouse, children, other relations, servants, apprentices, boarders, sojourners’,⁵⁶ the Victorian family became increasingly narrowly defined as parents and their children (and

⁵² A more extensive discussion of Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis’ discourse and how it compares and differentiates itself from that of etiquette literature can be found in Chapter IV.

⁵³ Mrs Sarah Ellis, *Women of England* (London, 1839), p. 10.

⁵⁴ Ellis, *Women of England*, p. 31, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 16.

⁵⁶ Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 272.

occasionally close relatives; more occasionally, a deeply trusted, probably life-long, servant). The family seat, the home, was now to be a private haven, which shielded inhabitants from the forces of industrialisation and urbanisation. The home was to be characterised by peace, quiet, and orderliness, a reflection of the respectability of the family. The wife's role was to ensure this state and the husband's role was to repose in it. This at least partial domestication of masculinity was comparatively novel and found its peak from the 1830s to 1870s, when as John Tosh notes, 'didactic writers in Victorian England were almost at one in declaring that bourgeois men not only had time for a domestic life, but a deep and compelling need of it'.⁵⁷ An orderly, comfortable home was treated as the reward for the demands of working and bread winning. Though united by the household and familial structure, the daytime activities of men and women were thus expected to take place separately but culminating in a coming together at the breakfast and dinner table.

Ever since the publication of Leonore Davidoff's and Catherine Hall's pioneering *Family Fortunes* in the late 1980s, there has been much debate around the idea of 'separate spheres', a staple term in historical studies of gender and domesticity.⁵⁸ Classically, the assumption had been that men, in their role as breadwinners, were assigned to the 'public sphere' whereas women, in their roles as wives as mothers, were relegated to the 'private sphere', functioning ideally as Coventry Patmore's famous 'Angel in the House'. Ideally, there was to be only minimal access to the public (political, educational, legal, financial) spheres for women. Davidoff and Hall offer a more nuanced reading of these spheres than had previously been suggested, highlighting the 'multifaceted notion of causation and change'.⁵⁹ They see 'public' and 'private' not as absolute

⁵⁷ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, 1. publ. in paperback, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 6. For an early recognition of this aspect of Victorian domesticity, see Walter Edwards Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830 - 1870*, Yale Paperbound, 99, Renewed (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr, 1985 [first published 1957]), pp. 341-8.

⁵⁸ For an extensive discussion and summary of previous scholarship, see: Robert Brink Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London; New York: Longman, 2013).

⁵⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xvi.

categories but rather as a descriptive framework, which serves to disseminate the ‘topical ideologies of manliness and femininity’ and the ‘shifting conceptions of the family and its relation to “the world”’.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the sense of ‘separate spheres’, derived from the evangelical revival in the late eighteenth century, ‘had’, as they argue ‘become common sense of the English middle class’ by the 1840s.⁶¹

Many scholars have since acknowledged their indebtedness to their work and have continued and revised the agenda set by *Family Fortunes*.⁶² Amanda Vickery’s subsequent article ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’ (1993) also contributed significantly to changing the narrative of the ‘separate spheres’ debate.⁶³ In an extensive review of the preceding literature, highlighting the persistent and problematic oversimplification of women’s experience, Vickery argued for the ‘unpredictable variety of private experience, in any given period, whatever the dominant ideology’.⁶⁴ More specifically, she made the case that the spheres analogy was inadequate to describe the realities of Victorian women. Their lives and activities did not fit such a categorical framework of gender-based distinction in their activities.⁶⁵ More recently, Simon Morgan has in *A Victorian Woman’s Place* (2007) made a case for the re-evaluation of Victorian women’s public lives, highlighting the blurred lines between public and private.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xvi.

⁶¹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 149.

⁶² For an extensive reassessment of Davidoff and Hall’s work and its relevance for the historical discipline see: Kathryn Gleadle, ‘Revisiting *Family Fortunes*: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Publication of L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson)’, *Women’s History Review*, 16.5 (2007), 773–82 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020701447848>>.

⁶³ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1993), pp. 383–414.

⁶⁴ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres?’, p. 390.

⁶⁵ For a similar characterisation of more recent scholarship on the separate spheres debate, see also: Simon Morgan, ‘Between Public And Private: Gender, Domesticity, And Authority In The Long Nineteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 54.4 (2011), 1197–1210 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X11000458>>.

⁶⁶ Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman’s Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, International Library of Historical Studies, 40 (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007).

The concepts of ‘public’ and ‘private’ themselves need further interrogation here. Closely linked to these concepts are the understandings of sociability which had shifted at the turn of the eighteenth century. Amanda Vickery and Philipp Carter have both more closely examined the shift in sociability, Carter concluding that at the turn of the nineteenth century there was ‘a desire to move [...] to more exclusive and intimate forms of sociability’.⁶⁷ With this development the physical locations of social intercourse changed from formerly more openly accessible spaces to the home, ‘where the dining- and drawing-room became key locations for genteel contact’.⁶⁸ One example of this change was that coffee-houses, the popular meeting places of the previous century gave way to the privacy of the club.⁶⁹ The underwriter Joseph Farington, who in the 1770s proclaimed in his diary: ‘I go into the coffee house to do my business with those I have business to do with’, would but fifty years later do his business in the privacy of his club.⁷⁰

As Chapter II of this thesis aims to show, the new-found exclusivity of social encounters in other people’s homes in many ways stimulated the emergence of etiquette literature, which in turn catered to the changed demands and expectations placed on potential participants in society. The manuals promised to get the reader ‘in’, a term which had the potential to range from securing an invitation to an intimate dinner party to a Levée at Buckingham Palace.

This shift in sociability changed not only the modes of access to society, but also resulted in women being increasingly associated with the domestic and the home, a preferential space for civilised middle- and upper-class socialising. Yet, interestingly, counter to many earlier descriptions in thrall to conduct literature’s gendered narratives of homemaking, Tosh has shown the great extent to which men were involved with the creation the home, asserting their taste in the choice

⁶⁷ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*, Women and Men in History (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 213.

⁶⁸ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 213.

⁶⁹ For an extensive discussion of the rise and fall of the coffee house in London, see: Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1963).

⁷⁰ Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, ed. by James Greig (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928), pp. 2253. Quoted in: David Kynaston, *The City of London. Volume 1*, (London: Vintage, 2015), p. 3.

of furnishings, and aiming to reflect their status through their property.⁷¹ Also, as noted above, women were certainly not ‘tied’ to the home to the extent often assumed. These aspects of the reality of Victorian families’ home were ignored in etiquette literature, which focused on how a female should design, guide, and control her household to ensure not only the happiness of her family but also the outward appearance of propriety and respectability.

Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin and Abigail Wills have argued in *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (2009) that ‘the creation of “separate spheres” was not a dramatic change in lifestyles so much as a dynamic and never-completed process of labelling that shaped the terms in which men and women understood their social world’.⁷² With different and evolving delineations of what was public and what private, they suggest that the retreat of women to the private was not as drastic as the terms suggest: the boundaries were uncertain and the private had the potential to usurp aspects of the public.⁷³ In this thesis, an example would be the dinner parties hosted by political wives, who were putting on elaborate displays within the privacy of their homes to further and support their husbands’ careers and to help them connect with potentially influential persons.

The argument made in Chapter IV below about the ideological formulation of femininity in etiquette manuals aligns itself most closely with terminology used by Eileen Yeo and Denise Riley in their respective works. They introduce a third sphere, the ‘social sphere’, which sits between public and private, and which allows women to extend their activities beyond motherhood and their duties as wives, through enabling them to socialise in their homes in a way that is neither exclusively public nor private.⁷⁴ This links neatly with the key positioning of women

⁷¹ See: John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, 1. publ. in paperback, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁷² *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, and Abigail Wills (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 8.

⁷³ *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ See: Eileen Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996) and Denise Riley, *‘Am I That Name?’: Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History*, Language, Discourse, Society (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1988).

in the etiquette literature. In this, women, in their role as hostess, were primarily seen as navigating a sphere that was neither entirely private nor public. It was a sphere delineated and filled with social engagements which reached outside the realm of the family and close friends, but not as far as a public assembly. Through afternoon teas, visits, dinner parties, balls and the like, etiquette manuals created a controlled (and supposedly ‘safer’) social environment for women, an ideological framework which is explored at length in Chapter IV.

While I acknowledge an important debt to Vickery’s and subsequent scholars’ arguments about the reality of Victorian women’s lives being more complex than some scholarship on separate spheres might have suggested, the ideological separation of spheres very much formed the ideological basis of etiquette writings. The social reality which etiquette manuals created through the ideological formulation and redefinition of femininity itself constructs, if you will, a ‘separate sphere’ from the lived reality of women. ‘Separate spheres’ for men and women constituted the framework of etiquette manuals in that they gender the spaces they describe. Though manuals such as *The Glass of Fashion* (1881) stated in the introduction that the guide was ‘intended for both sexes’, much of the content spoke to women and their management of not only the household, but also the social aspects of family life.⁷⁵

While this thesis is indebted to existing historical analyses of gender, space, and domesticity, it also ventures new suggestions on how etiquette manuals can, in the context of Victorian women, be read as an attempt to maintain a conservative ideal of femininity. The exploration of prescriptive behavioural ideology as pushed by etiquette manuals is one of the areas that has remained relatively unexplored even forty years after the dialogue was re-started by Davidoff and Hall.⁷⁶ Etiquette manuals form part of the rapid expansion of material directed at

⁷⁵ The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881), p. vi.

⁷⁶ See also: *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *Essays in Literature and Society* (New York: Methuen,

females as they proliferated in the book market, were able to propagate their ideas of the prevalent gender ideologies were disseminated to a wide audience of readers.

The book market is indeed a significant factor in the history and impact of etiquette literature. By the start of the nineteenth century, the book market was evolving and had changed greatly from decades before. According to David Vincent's calculations, the average number of individual titles published per year during the 1790s was 372, a twenty five percent increase compared to the first half of the eighteenth century. By the late 1820s, the number had further expanded to an average of 842 new books per year and by the 1850s, it had tripled to roughly 2,500.⁷⁷ In terms of monthly publications, Vincent charts the same rapid expansion: whereas in 1831 there were but 177 monthly publications in the following two years an astonishing 59 new titles were launched and by 1853, there were a total of 362 regularly available.⁷⁸

While the book market in the eighteenth century kept many prices artificially high in order to remain 'concentrated in the upper-income groups', this was followed, as William St Clair notes, by 'a sharp change of direction upward toward the end of the eighteenth century, a trend that continue[d] for the next hundred years'.⁷⁹ This change of direction entailed more affordable book prices, assisted by the use of cheaper materials and printing advances which facilitated mass printing, which scholars such as James Raven and Alexis Weedon have highlighted in their respective works.⁸⁰ Weedon notes that by the mid-nineteenth century books, still of good quality,

1987); Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Reading Women Writing (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing and the Domestic Sphere', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1800-1900*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 119–41.

⁷⁷ David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography*, University Paperbacks, 790 (London ; New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 116.

⁷⁸ Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom*, p. 116.

⁷⁹ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁰ See for example: James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1992); and James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); and Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book*

could be produced for perhaps a third of the cost of forty years earlier. Moves to machine-produced rather than hand-made paper, to cloth rather than leather bindings, and factory rather than artisan methods and working-practices in the printing industry, were the key drivers in the reduction of costs.⁸¹

The rise of literacy was a key factor in the development of the book market, as the more affordable book prices not only meant that books could be bought by a wider audience but could be *read* or encountered by many more beyond that. Richard D. Altick notes how by the dawn of the nineteenth century, new attitudes towards education, even of the working class, were making a difference.⁸² Charity schools were introduced which taught children at least the basics of reading, so they could read the Bible.⁸³ Literacy rates steadily grew even before the 1870 Education Act, as David Vincent has demonstrated in his study *The Rise of Mass Literacy*, arguing that between 1840 and 1890 illiteracy rapidly disappeared not only between the sexes, but – importantly for this study – the classes, opening up a much wider demographic of readers which, in turn, etiquette manuals responded to.⁸⁴

Etiquette manuals, with the first published in 1834, thus appeared at a time when the literary market was rapidly expanding, and set to expand much further - not only in the number of publications, but also in new publishing houses, a growing number of new authors and, most importantly, a steadily widening readership.⁸⁵ The etiquette manual, judging from its formats,

Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916, The Nineteenth Century Series (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

⁸¹ For details, see Weedon, *Victorian Publishing*, pp. 59-88.

⁸² Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, 2nd ed (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), pp. 31.

⁸³ Altick, *The English Common Reader*, p. 33.

⁸⁴ David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Themes in History (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2000), pp. 9-10; See also: David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 19 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁸⁵ For a more detailed discussion on Victorian publishers, editors and authors, see for example: *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, Readers*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell, Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

pricing and rhetorical/generic characteristics, catered to a group of emerging readers whom we might now categorise as 'lower' or 'aspirant' middle-class. With the promise of social success upon imitation, the literature detailed prescriptive sets of behaviour taken from the upper-class London society and was free from the moral or religious concerns of conduct literature of previous centuries. Even though etiquette guides were reminiscent of the preceding literatures surrounding conduct, they were shaped by a changed political, social, and cultural environment. With its appearance on the book market in the 1830s, etiquette literature formed and defined its own genre, which acted as a site for playing out the micropolitics of class, gender and the domestic, as will be explored throughout the thesis.

Previous Scholarship on Etiquette

While the larger contexts into which etiquette manuals fit – book history, social mobility, gender history, and the history of the Victorian middle class – have been broadly examined by historians and literary scholars, etiquette manuals have often escaped notice. The reputation they gained during the Victorian Age for triviality and ephemerality seems to have lingered, so that they are rarely analysed or studied. Michael Curtin remains the only scholar to have dedicated a monograph to etiquette literature. His work *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners* (1987) examines their provenance, content, and the way society was presented through them.⁸⁶ Though he examines a large corpus of etiquette works ranging from the mid-1830s to 1914, Curtin's analyses remain isolated from a larger historiographical context. Leonore Davidoff, in her *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (1986), says that we should remember that quite often etiquette books could

⁸⁶ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987).

be simply 'sheer fantasy-peddling for profit'.⁸⁷ But her work serves as an important counterpart to Curtin's work. Her study of the upper-class London world engages in more detail with how a 'reinterpretation of the idea of Society' occurred in the first decades of the nineteenth century, reconfiguring modes of behaviour and routes of access to fashionable and upper-class circles.⁸⁸ Davidoff terms her study 'an introductory work' and indeed, it serves as an excellent starting point for further inquiry.⁸⁹ Marjorie Morgan's *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858* (1994) has partially carried on the work Curtin and Davidoff began. Her period of inquiry starts earlier and ends two decades after the inception of the etiquette manual, a period in which, as Morgan argues, the trend and rise of professionalism magnified the need for the codification of behavioural codes, which in turn blurred the lines between aristocratic and middle-class values and practices.⁹⁰ Overall, the arguments developed in these three books are consistent with Leonore Davidoff's and Catherine Hall's seminal *Family Fortunes* (1987) published around the same time. Rather than probing the gap between ideology and lived reality, however, my focus is on one hitherto somewhat neglected aspect of the market in books that contributed to the ideological field in which Victorian lives were lived.⁹¹

All the historical studies just mentioned were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More than thirty years ago, the limitations in the way of identifying primary sources were far greater than today. Digital resources, online archives, and general advances in the sharing of open access sources for historical study have facilitated research greatly. The aforementioned studies all faced

⁸⁷ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 16.

⁸⁸ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 15.

⁹⁰ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 14.

⁹¹ See: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).

constraints on the accessibility of materials and the interdisciplinary approaches that the study of etiquette lends itself to.

As outlined above, this thesis makes use of a wide array of sources and material. It is not so much a revision of the studies published over three decades ago, as an attempt to broaden existing understanding of etiquette literature by extending the scope of analysis to previously unidentified material. Using resources including the *British Newspaper Archive* and the *John Johnson Collection* at the Bodleian has helped me ground my claims quantitatively and qualitatively in a way that previous scholars of etiquette manuals were not yet able to. Through key word searches of online archives, I was able to find previously unidentified etiquette manuals as well as identifying previously unknown etiquette authors, filling in some of the blanks earlier scholars were drawing around authorship, readership, and the nature of the market in etiquette. While the basis of this study has thus been laid by others, its key competence is in integrating etiquette manuals into our socio-historical understanding of a changing market in books, a gradual democratisation and the cultural shifts in class relations that accompanied it and changing gender expectations.

Defining Etiquette

Defining etiquette literature in terms of its discursive field, conceptual integrity, and genre affiliations is no easy matter. Etiquette quickly became a distinct discourse in the 1830s not only in the adoption of an advice manual format (as defined below), but in its circulation through other printed media such as fiction, periodicals, and newspapers. Often, however, discussion in these other media materially overlapped with the manuals: newspapers and periodicals frequently printed snippets of popular manuals and passages they deemed important. Fiction writers similarly made explicit reference to rules which could be found within the pages of an etiquette guide, and on

occasion referenced specific guides directly (more often than not, as we shall see, in a spirit of satire).

While there is no definite line between etiquette literature and conduct literature of the same or previous decades, there are stark differences which support the demarcation of etiquette literature as a separate genre. A consideration of the conduct literature genre, especially in Chapters I, II and IV, makes explicit how distinctive the discourse of etiquette literature really was in its exclusion of moral concerns, its structure and linguistic construction, and finally, its treatment of femininity. By contrast, much general conduct literature adopted strong religious undertones and a parental (or at least benevolent) manner of narration; much of this broad category of writing made the assumption that women were strong moral influences on family and society. ‘Conduct books’, in William St Clair’s words, thus ‘purported to offer immutable and timeless truths based on biblical precepts’.⁹² Etiquette manuals were detached from religious or moral concerns, cultivated an impersonal tone of narration, and saw women as agents of society (as distinct from morality), controlling its borders and acting as regulating influences. In their early incarnations there was some desire to be ‘current’, detailing the latest fashions and customs (although this did not mean changing social rules). But, as is the general theme of this thesis, any ‘currency’ of the books faded as the genre aged, with little change over time and publishers happy to reissue old material.

The specific qualities which set etiquette manuals apart from other, comparable kinds of conduct literature involved not only content, but format. An etiquette guide was a concise manual that in simple language and syntax advised its reader how to behave in specific social circumstances. Typically no more than sixty to eighty pages, it devoted individual chapters to specific social circumstances – the introduction, the social call, a formal dinner, a ball, etc. – and

⁹² William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 77.

provided a list of rules relevant to each occasion. Etiquette guides were marketed as reference guides rather than ‘proper’ literature and often appeared in the same columns as dictionaries or language books. Indeed, one could call them ‘social grammar books’ for learning how to behave among the London elite, as one etiquette writer suggested in 1871: ‘Society has its “grammar” as language has; and the rules of grammar must be learnt’.⁹³

The manuals that form the primary materials for this study of etiquette carry publication dates ranging from 1834 and 1890. In Chapter I, I argue that the first emergence of etiquette in the form of a manual occurred with Charles Day’s *Hints on Etiquette* (1834), distinct from previous conduct literature and a blueprint for many later etiquette guides, which all took inspiration from its short and pragmatic format, copying the simplistic prose and authoritative tone.⁹⁴ Through the sixty-year period in which this form flourished, British society saw significant changes – two reform acts, extension of the male suffrage and growing pressure to recognise the rights of women, and the rise in literacy, amongst many other things. In a rapidly expanding book market, fuelled by urbanisation, suburbanisation, train travel – etiquette manuals barely changed their content and tone. Seemingly oblivious to change (save when it threatened their authority) they continued to advise in the same manner and advocated the same rules in the 1880s than in the 1840s, sometimes even reprinting identical content for decades. It is for this reason that quotations from manuals will at points be treated in terms of their wording and content, rather than their date of publication, as the latter is not always a relevant factor in the analysis (though the fact that they were being reprinted is).

Of course, there was some marginal variation of individual rules over time, but such changes tended to be minimal; essential rules, such as the idealisation of upper-class standards (for

⁹³ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 1.

⁹⁴ Michael Curtin has equally claimed *Hints on Etiquette* (1836) to be the first etiquette manual of its kind. In: Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987).

example a leisured wife as hostess), remained constants. It might be surprising that during a period of such great cultural upheaval advice a publishing format should remain frozen in time, though it reiterates the argument I am discussing more extensively in Chapter II, that etiquette guides had an additional agenda to teaching perfect behaviour: trying to maintain a Victorian social order perceived by many as increasingly fragile under pressure of democratisation.

Approaching Etiquette – Methodology

The historian of etiquette is faced with a central dilemma: how is one to analyse manners that one can no longer actively observe? Jenny Davidson rightly remarks that ‘the history of manners is to a great extent the history of the conduct book, as this prescriptive genre is where manners leave their most obvious traces’.⁹⁵ What Davidson so precisely captures is the close but fraught relationship between book history and behavioural history. It is simply impossible to study behaviour without reverting to written sources, which is why the study of etiquette is, inevitably, first and foremost a study of etiquette manuals and their reception in the wider print culture. On the other hand, etiquette – a prescriptive and all-too-clearly ideologically laden genre —has little or no *prima facie* claim to be a reliable source of report on the social reality.

Using etiquette guides, or prescriptive literature in general, as primary sources brings with it many pitfalls than one must be wary of. The problem faced by previous scholarship is twofold: When using advice literature, scholars have in the past been accused of taking its contents too literally, giving too little consideration to form, voice, intended audience, and (insofar as we can retrieve this information) authorial and publishing intent. In his article ‘Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers’ (1975), published almost fifty years ago now, Jay Mechling raises acute

⁹⁵ Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 7.

concerns about the use of advice literature in historical research, arguing that advice manuals do not tell us anything about actual behaviour of the time.⁹⁶ While strictly speaking this is, as already acknowledged, true, Mechling fails to recognise the inferences one can make if one does not take the literature at face value, though his comments on the all too literal treatment of conduct literature by historians can be seen as a valuable reminder to respect the gulf between practice and theory.

There is a ‘dominant reluctance’, writes Peter K. Andersson about the predicament of using advice literature as sources, ‘to go too far beyond claims based on linguistic structure of written sources’.⁹⁷ Andersson captures the main hurdle this project faces: to gauge how far to venture beyond the limitations of the etiquette manuals in making deductions from their content, their structure, and their format. Leah Price’s *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (2012) suggests one model, adapted to the extreme cases in which books were not read at all but served other purposes: she convincingly demonstrates what was done with books when they were not read, arguing that ‘printed matter participated [...] in a range of transactions that stretche[d] far beyond reading’.⁹⁸ Supplementing close readings with a sensitive reconstruction of how Victorians thought and felt about books, Price offers a new model for integrating social history and literary theory with book history. The paratext, marginalia, advertisements of books as well as their use as, for example, prizes and presents here become as indicative of etiquette literature’s usage as the (scarce) evidence of their being read.

The rules depicted in etiquette manuals might not tell us much (if anything) about the actual behaviour of Victorians, but they are telling evidence of how their writers and (more

⁹⁶ J. Mechling, ‘Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers’, *Journal of Social History*, 9.1 (1975), 44–63 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/9.1.44>>.

⁹⁷ Peter K. Andersson, *Street Life in Victorian London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 7.

⁹⁸ Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. ii.

cautiously) readers sought to navigate a changing social structure. There is no reason not to accept that they reflect a broad, disconcerting set of expectations (the understanding of barriers of conduct in need of overcoming) felt by those wishing to participate in society. Throughout the thesis, I argue that the ideological biases portrayed in etiquette manuals have the potential to reveal much about the felt instability of Victorian society – the expectations captured in the literature spread into a wide array of media, collectively telling of the aspirations, the uncertainty and societal upheaval of those times.

Another challenge arises from the omission of much etiquette literature from British libraries of record. Despite its popularity, etiquette literature was from the outset regarded as ephemeral, and much of it was rejected from the Copyright libraries on that basis.⁹⁹ There is little documentation of its production and circulation still in existence. Close readings of and deductions from the source itself therefore are fundamental, without which it would be impossible to answer some of the questions in this thesis. While I do not argue that etiquette manuals reflect the reality of Victorian times, I draw inferences from their style, their form (literary and physical) and their content. Those inferences inform some of the key arguments of this thesis. The thesis works with a variety of historical documents and sources beyond the etiquette manuals themselves looking to contribute to various relevant strands of scholarship: book history, literary criticism, cultural history, and (specifically) historical debates over the aspiration to and experience of social mobility.

Eighty-four etiquette guides have been interrogated for this study, a substantial increase on previous studies of etiquette literature. Although only a smaller, representative number of these will be quoted (it is a feature of the genre that it lacks variety, except at the – interesting – margins), the body of works examined has informed the main arguments presented. The same goes for accounts of experience with etiquette: about thirty diary or letter collections have been examined,

⁹⁹ See Hannah Field, 'Legal Deposit, Literary Value, and Rejected Books at the 1818 Select Committee on the Copyright Acts', *The Review of English Studies*, Volume 73, Issue 308, February 2022, pp. 121–143.

from which I directly cite selected examples.

The Structure of The Habits of Good Society and its Parameters

The chapters of this thesis take on the challenge of thinking about etiquette literature in all its myriad forms. In the process, they are aiming to add to our understanding of the concept of etiquette, both in terms of how it historically emerged in Britain over the Victorian period and as a theoretical construct trying to infiltrate and shape Victorians' social behaviour. Each chapter of this thesis tackles one facet of etiquette literature: its creation, its authors and readers, its origins, its language and physical shape, the female-centric narrative, and, finally, the way it engages with particular social spaces.

Chapter I introduces etiquette literature by examining 'the creation of etiquette'. The rapidly evolving book market played a key role in the development and success of etiquette literature; the texts could now be cheaply produced and pedalled to a much wider audience. Readers, writers, and publishers present the next point of inquiry that is much more difficult to trace. To the archivist's and historian's great frustration, preservation was no concern when it came to the early after-life of etiquette manuals. They were typically regarded as of an ephemeral nature, so that publishers' archives as well as libraries and databases of evidence of reading mostly bear few or no traces of them. This chapter therefore relies not just on the little surviving historical evidence of production but uses the etiquette manuals themselves as sources to reconstruct from the text a history that otherwise might remain lost. An examination of the linguistic parameters of etiquette literature for example suggests that even though prefaces direct themselves at the upper middle class, the targeted readers were usually of a lower (middle) class background. As the struggles of the lower middle classes are still underrepresented in scholarship, etiquette literature presents an interesting puzzle piece in their understanding of social mobility. A study of etiquette

writers also puts pressure on some earlier assumptions about the personnel and the motives behind this industry. Archival work has shown that some writers in fact used etiquette literature to further their own agendas of social reform.

The second chapter ‘Setting the Scene for Etiquette’ then goes back to chronicle etiquette’s emergence in the French and Spanish courts and its transition into the English language and English (print) culture. It will then look at how etiquette evolved in the English (sometime British) context, and how it set itself apart from conduct literature and the literature of politeness in the eighteenth-century, arguing that etiquette did not evolve in an isolated way but shows similarities to antecedent concepts; that said, the treatment of behaviour detached from morality and religion was importantly unique to the concept of etiquette. Changing understandings and forms of sociability, and more sharply codified expectations of polite societal intercourse, led to the formation of etiquette as a specialist area of the advice industry. The literature promised access to ‘good society’, or, at the very least, a look behind closed doors. As Charles William Day, a figure I consider in more detail in Chapter III remarks, etiquette manuals broadly aimed to instruct all those ‘who do not know what is proper [...] sav[ing] the blush upon [a reader’s] cheek[s]’, therefore trying to appeal to a wide audience in quite various circumstances.¹⁰⁰

Chapter III, ‘The Etiquette Manual’, turns its attention more closely to the features of etiquette literature itself. Linguistic and structuralist analyses show how language was employed to manipulate and control readers’ impressions and emotions, aiming to encourage compliance. The restrictive, imperative discourse sought to create a version of social reality in which the upper class was the non plus ultra, setting the tone for society as a whole and presenting an example to be imitated. The system of behaviour was sold as a recipe for success. This chapter takes a closer look

¹⁰⁰ Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society. Revised by a Lady of Rank*, 19th edition (London, 1839), p. ix.

at the ingredients in this recipe exploring what evidence exists as to whether those who applied it in real life actually succeeded socially as etiquette authors promised.

‘Etiquette for Ladies’, Chapter IV of this thesis, seeks to investigate the relationship between etiquette and gender. While writers up to and including the eighteenth century were predominantly male, from the early nineteenth century onwards the default gender seemingly shifted to female. This change can however not entirely be credited to women gradually entering the literary scene and book market, but rather reflects a change in the perception of behavioural literature itself. The chapter therefore investigates this ‘feminization’ of etiquette literature and the cultural evidence surrounding it. The second part of the chapter interrogates the impact of etiquette on gender roles and vice versa. It also pays closer attention to the way ideology was shaped and to how the new role of wives as ‘guardians of society’ was envisioned in etiquette manuals. Women were expected to regulate society not through moral and gentle influence as it was prescribed in conduct literature of the eighteenth century but rather were expected to police the gates of society and serve as impeccably behaved role models.

The subparts of the final Chapter, ‘The Spatial Dimensions of Etiquette’ can be grouped together under the general aim of examining etiquette in different spatial contexts, though space is employed more as an organisational category than as a geographic lens of analysis. First, etiquette for public and private life will be examined and standard conceptions of the Victorians’ over-formality will be challenged. An examination of etiquette in the country and the city brings interesting insights into the perceived tensions between the rural and urban population and the differing behavioural standards that had to be obeyed according to one’s location. A rule that was considered essential in London could for example lead to ridicule, exclusion, or offence in the countryside. Lastly, Victorian etiquette will be brought into the context of travel, showing how command of etiquette was thought to be a marker of a distinctly national sense of respectability, refinement, and good culture.

The parameters of this study are thus geographically limited to England, though I will occasionally refer to adaptations of English etiquette from the colonies, or America, to tease out in how far the use of etiquette became a marker of Englishness.¹⁰¹ Because I engage in-depth with class and gender, there is unfortunately limited space for investigations of etiquette literature's consideration of other important concepts such as race, its ideas surrounding childhood, and other geographical renderings and continuations of this concept. Colonial etiquette and the treatment of those of a different race is a particularly rich topic, for which I hope this study will serve as a starting point.

In terms of temporal parameters, this thesis necessarily starts with the first etiquette manual in 1834 (though it considers the emergence of the concept over previous decades). The end point of this study was less easily determined. Etiquette manuals are still in circulation today, some of them reprints of mid-nineteenth-century manuals, some of them adaptations of the genre adjusted for the contemporary reader (not always comically or nostalgically). However, in terms of etiquette manuals that follow the definition set out in this thesis – short, pragmatic guides that advise the readers about (supposedly) aristocratic ideals of behaviour – there was a significant turning point in the 1890s. The number of new manuals published (not reprints of earlier manuals) dwindled drastically compared to previous decades, and the articles and columns in newspapers or periodicals similarly decreased. The main body of the thesis will investigate the sixty-year span between 1834 and the 1890s in which etiquette manuals proliferated, etiquette's 'heyday', tracking the emergence of the concept of etiquette and etiquette manuals, their form, content, and cultural and social implications.

¹⁰¹ As I have mentioned in the preface, Covid-19 sadly did not permit me to do more extensive research on American or colonial etiquette. For those interested, the New York Public Library as well as the archives at Duke University provide excellent starting points.

The conclusion then considers the lasting effects of etiquette, though in a much more concise form of analysis. E. E. Kellett, the son of a Wesleyan minister born in the mid-1860s, remarked he had ‘seen no such rapid or complete change as that which took place in the eighties and nineties’.¹⁰² There is, he went on, ‘far more difference between the mind of 1900 and that of 1880 than between 1880 and 1640’.¹⁰³ To do justice to this tumultuous time would be impossible: sketching the progression and evolution of etiquette manuals at the turn of the century towards the present day puts the previous chapters in the context of a literary form that found its beginnings in the Victorian Age, but which continued to impact writing on manners.

In noting that the discursive recognisability and codification of etiquette manuals has survived up until the present day, adapting over time to individual spaces and circumstances, I have a pressing example to hand. Undertaking doctoral research at Oxford required me to promise, like all members of the university, that I would obey the ‘Rules of Conduct for Readers’ of the Bodleian Library in Oxford — which one ‘*must* familiarise’ oneself with and observe, if one wishes to enter through its heavy wooden doors.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ernest Edward Kellett, *As I Remember* (London: V. Gollancz Ltd., 1936), pp. 105-106.

¹⁰³ Kellett, *As I Remember*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Rules of Conduct for Readers’ (Bodleian Library, 2018)

<<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/libraries/policies/rules-conduct>> [accessed 5th of May 2022].

CHAPTER I

Creating Etiquette

While the word ‘etiquette’ began circulating in the English language as early as 1737, the commercial realisation of the concept (in the form of pocket-sized manuals) did not occur until the mid-1830s, almost a whole century later. This chapter begins by looking more closely at some of the developments in the literary market in the lead up to the emergence of etiquette manuals. One factor was improvements in production, in its costs and its distribution: some of these developments have most notably been outlined in recent works by James Raven, tackling the ‘business of books’, shedding light on selling, publishing, and authoring books at the dawn of the new printing age in the first decades of the century.¹⁰⁵ Another factor was the growing popularity of genres such as cookbooks (which started to include precepts of behaviour in an aspirational manner) and silver fork novels (which satisfied voyeurism by shedding light on aspects of aristocratic life), which highlighted the potential the consumer market had for creating etiquette literature (a genre which combined aspects of these popular genres). The aim of this first part of the chapter is therefore not only to track the changes which facilitated the emergence of etiquette literature but also demonstrate how it fitted into the literary market as such.

This will be explored further in the second part of the chapter, which shifts the attention

¹⁰⁵ See for example: James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1992); and James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

to ‘the people behind etiquette’: the readers (who created demand) and writers (who created the content). The sense of mystery etiquette literature lacks in content, it more than makes up for when it comes to the persons involved with the production and consumption of the manuals. The two big questions surrounding etiquette literature – who were the readers of etiquette manuals and who were the writers? – are difficult to answer and tracking down these ‘people behind etiquette’ has perhaps been the biggest challenge of this thesis.

Publishers’ archives often neglect this ephemeral kind of literature. For example, the archive of Frederick Warne, one of the main publishing houses of etiquette literature, put the emphasis of preservation on ‘proper’ literature, in their case, the works of Beatrix Potter, leaving references to etiquette manuals far and few between. Traces of reading remain equally as elusive so that reading databases reveal nothing and diaries, letters, and other correspondence only a limited amount: while ‘etiquette’ as a concept is mentioned, discussed, and advised upon, there are no references to the manuals as such or where the knowledge has come from. This is not entirely surprising. As we will see, neither writers nor readers have left many traces of their association with the production and reception of these manuals. On one hand, this was a genre that was heavily critiqued and ridiculed in the press. On the other, it was a kind of literature written for those who were lacking good manners and were in need of help to blend in; openly *admitting* having read such literature defeated the point. So, understandably, both writers and readers mostly stayed silent, hiding, respectively, behind pseudonyms and anonymous notes in the margins.

As there are so few studies of etiquette manuals, even fewer people have set out to answer questions of author- and readership. Michael Curtin, Marjorie Morgan, and Elizabeth Langland have all made similar speculations in their respective works about non-aristocratic, profit-seeking authors, yet have been unsuccessful in finding evidence to support their theories.¹⁰⁶ Questions of

¹⁰⁶ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987); Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); and Elizabeth Langland,

author- and readership have therefore not been touched upon in over twenty years though much has been published in the meantime to establish a more comprehensive backdrop of book history against which etiquette manuals' audience and producers can be examined and reconstructed. David Vincent has for example written extensively on book owning and borrowing and the practice of reading among the middle and lower classes in the nineteenth century (a crucial demographic for etiquette readers).¹⁰⁷

In this chapter, I aim to offer a more nuanced analysis of the book market, the readers, and the authors of etiquette literature than has previously been available. I especially focus on the 'people behind etiquette', as they have remained shrouded in mystery in historical scholarship and have often been stereotyped. I analyse how etiquette readers were perceived, marketed to, and as far as the marginalia allows, how real readers experienced and read etiquette literature, showing that there was no monolithic 'etiquette reader' but that the literature allowed for different and individual usage. Similarly, I examine the standardised etiquette author persona that most writers employed as a framework of authority and credibility as well as speculations on who was hiding behind the pseudonyms, before moving on to more detailed portraits of three etiquette authors – Thomas Low Nichols, Lady Colin Campbell, and Emily Shirreff. This will offer a more balanced portrait of who an etiquette author was, showing that it was not only socially and morally questionable figures lurking behind the pseudonyms, but that there was real variety among etiquette authors, who manipulated the genre to fit their wider agendas.

The methodology of this chapter can, however, not be entirely straightforward and relies on deduction and inference as key components for the analysis of etiquette literature. Such an approach is not untested in book history scholarship. Though almost seventy years ago now,

'Women's Writing and the Domestic Sphere', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1800-1900*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 119–41.

¹⁰⁷ See for example: David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 19 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Themes in History (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2000).

Richard Altick's approach in *The English Common Reader* (1957) still remains valuable. Altick puts individual classes' circumstances into a reading context and these habits and abilities in turn are seen to have dictated the format of the reading material. His method can be applied in reverse to etiquette manuals, allowing for conclusions about readership to be made from the formatting of the literature.¹⁰⁸ A particularly important contribution here is that of William St Clair whose reconstruction of the 'reading nation' of the eighteenth century is largely based on analytic inference from his sources. His approach becomes especially relevant when trying to assess etiquette literature's market force, for which one has to mostly rely on the newspaper adverts or editions, which were almost certainly exaggerated in their claims for the popularity of the works in question. However, St Clair has found that even distorted sales figures are 'valuable sources for reconstructing the historical horizons of expectations against which newly printed texts were perceived'.¹⁰⁹

This chapter takes a similar approach. It not only relies on historical evidence to reconstruct readership and authorship but will also use the manuals themselves as sources from which insights can be gained through their physicality, format, and linguistic analysis of their content. It will pay special attention to what Gérard Genette calls 'those liminal devices and conventions, both within the text (peritext) and outside it (epitext) that mediate the book to the reader', including forewords, format, binding, advertisement, reviews as well as editions.¹¹⁰ In this way, I hope to achieve a nuanced analysis of the genre, going beyond what scholars in the 1980s and 1990s have deduced.

¹⁰⁸ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, 2nd ed (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁹ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 185.

¹¹⁰ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Literature, Culture, Theory, 20 (Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 24-46.

The Commercialisation of Etiquette: A New Literary Market

The rapidly expanding and evolving book market of the early to mid-nineteenth century undoubtedly helped to pave the way for etiquette manuals. The late eighteenth-century literary market in books was still largely dominated by religious works and novels. Both authors and publishers, according to James Raven's findings, were 'extremely conscious of the expectations of the readership' and the period saw an intense 'discussion of forms and objectives. Novels, in particular, were said by their publishers to be useful conduct books'.¹¹¹ The novel was not only a form of entertainment, but a vehicle for the debate about education and the moral guidance of the young. Because of this plurality of purposes for fiction, numerous factors needed to be considered in both the editing and publication of a work so that it would fulfil the criterion of 'usefulness' for its reader.

These concerns for literature serving a plurality of purposes lessened when new, cheaper production techniques were introduced. In her extensive study of Victorian publishing, Alexis Weedon has found that there was a turning point in book production between 1830 and 1850, when the publishing process simplified immensely through changed copyright laws and lesser financial risks that needed to be taken when publishing a new work.¹¹² By the end of the eighteenth century, the situation for writers had also improved, whereas before writers would only be granted a lump sum for the copyright to their work if anything at all, the idea of remuneration in relation to sales numbers was becoming established. In regard to etiquette manuals, the continual payments were not quite the norm yet up until the mid-1860s, with receipts in the Routledge archive detailing one-off payments for etiquette manuals, rather than continual royalties.¹¹³ Closer to the end of the

¹¹¹ James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford [England]: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 66.

¹¹² Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*, The Nineteenth Century Series (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 88.

¹¹³ Routledge Archive at The National Archives. See for example: 'Contract Book R-Z 1853-1873', Routledge Archive, The National Archives, UCL006447.

century, receipts in the Frederick Warne archive document that the author (and subsequent beneficiaries) of *Manners and Rules of Good Society* (1879) were being paid royalties over a period of at least fifty years, which certainly became a more attractive deal than that of a meagre lump sum the author would have been given previously.

Another advancement beneficial for the consolidation of etiquette literature was rising literacy. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, being able to read and write was very much a privilege of the professional and upper classes, and of those involved in business, as an essay of Bernard Mandeville from 1723 details:

Reading, Writing and Arithmetick are very necessary to those, whose Business require such Qualifications, but where Peoples Livelihood has no dependence on these Arts, they are very pernicious to the Poor, who are forc'd to get their Daily Bread by their Daily Labour.¹¹⁴

Yet this picture changed over the next decades: In 1781, by contrast, Samuel Johnson characterised Britain as 'a nation of readers'.¹¹⁵ Mandeville's and Johnson's differing impressions can be supported through historical evidence; in a study on the rise of literacy, David F. Mitch estimates, on the basis of a study of marriage registers, that in 1750, only about fifty percent of the population possessed basic literacy (the ability to write one's name), whereas in 1840, the number had risen to over sixty-five percent.¹¹⁶ David Vincent's findings in *The Rise of Mass Literacy* (2000) extend Mitch's estimates; Vincent's study shows that from 1840 to 1890 illiteracy rapidly disappeared, both among sexes as well as individual classes, so that even the working classes were mostly literate by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷

These numbers describe a widening demographic of readers, and a considerable expansion in the commercial opportunities open to book sellers. From 1830, books could increasingly be

¹¹⁴ 'An Essay on Charity and Charity Schools' in *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits* [1723], ed. Philip Harth Harmondsworth, Uk Penguin, 1970) p. 294.

¹¹⁵ Boswell James, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1999), p. 782.

¹¹⁶ David Franklin Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. xiii.

¹¹⁷ David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Themes in History (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2000), p. 9-10.

targeted at lower class and female readers, with writers and publishers able to target a much more specific audience for particular kinds of conduct literature. Vincent chronicles what he calls an initial ‘revolution in demand rather than supply’: ‘By the 1790s, the publication of new book titles was running at four times the level of the beginning of the century, and during the first half of the nineteenth century it was to increase by a further 600 percent to reach 2,500 [percent] a year by 1853’.¹¹⁸ The emergence of a concentrated market in etiquette publishing can be charted this point. Between five and seven new publications hit the market each year in the late 1830s, this number doubled in the 1840s and 50s, and continued to increase at only a slightly lower rate in the 1860s with a 40 percent increase in the number of etiquette publications compared to previous decades. But, of course, for these production numbers to come to be, demand had to be recognised first.

Perhaps less obviously, the demand for etiquette literature built upon that for existing literary forms such as cookery books and silver fork novels. Cookery books of the early nineteenth century did not only include recipes, but also had some similarities to etiquette literature in providing instructions on how to set a table, how to serve, and more interestingly how to act during dinner parties or afternoon tea. The cookery book in that way made an intimate connection with its reader that went beyond the dish in front of him and opened up the possibility of pragmatic counselling on how to navigate everyday circumstances. Cookery books were indeed a popular medium, with initial sales often in the tens of thousands and numerous editions of works sold.¹¹⁹

In the 1840s, when the famous poet Eliza Acton came to her publisher’s office with new material, he outright refused her with the words: ‘it is no good bringing me poetry; nobody wants

¹¹⁸ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 19 (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 11.

¹¹⁹ See for example: Rachel Rich, ‘Cookbook Writers and Recipe Readers: Georgiana Hill, Isabella Beeton and Victorian Domesticity’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Volume 25, Issue 3, July 2020, pp. 408–423; and Margaret Beetham, ‘Good Taste and Sweet Ordering: Dining with Mrs Beeton’, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2008), 36, pp. 391–406.

poetry now. Bring me a cookery book, and we might come to terms'.¹²⁰ Acton acted on the advice, putting together *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (1845), a successful title in its time. Even as great a writer as Charles Dickens pondered putting a cookery book on the market, as Lady Dorothy Nevill remembered from an evening at a dinner party: 'he laughed and chaffed, telling me, I remember, that he had a great scheme for writing a cookery-book, and I believe the poor man really meant it, but alas! His death, which occurred very shortly after, prevented the realization of the idea'.¹²¹

The advice feature of cookery books did however not entirely disappear with the rise of etiquette manuals as an independent genre. 'Without a knowledge of etiquette to be observed [...] a mistress would be unable to enjoy and appreciate those friendly pleasant meetings', states Mrs Beeton among a plethora of recipes and dining arrangements in 1861.¹²² Mrs Beeton was, of course, the household name of the cookery book genre. *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861) was a key text which, in Margaret Beetham's words, 'can be understood simply as part of the furniture of the tasteful middle-class home [...] and] a visible marker of class'.¹²³ Beeton's book not only marks an increased and lasting interest in domesticity, but documents the search for refinement, or 'elegance' as she calls it.¹²⁴ For Beeton, dining becomes a marker of social distinction: 'the rank which a people occupy in the grand scale may be measured by their way of taking their meals'.¹²⁵ In this way, cookery books continued to draw on and support the discourse of etiquette, quite literally in Beeton's case, as her empire established *The Queen* magazine in 1862, which exclusively dealt with London's high society, gossip, and manners.

A second, more complexly related literary antecedent of etiquette manuals was silver fork

¹²⁰ Frank Arthur Mumby, *Publishing and Bookselling: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Cape, 1956), p. 235.

¹²¹ Lady Dorothy Nevill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, ed. by Ralph Nevill (London: E. Arnold, 1906), p. 147.

¹²² Mrs. Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S. O. Beeton, 1861), p. 16

¹²³ Beetham, 'Good Taste and Sweet Ordering', p. 395.

¹²⁴ Mrs. Beeton, *Household Management*, p. 111, p. 460, p. 908.

¹²⁵ Mrs. Beeton, *Household Management*, p. 905.

fiction, a relatively short-lived literary genre emerging in the early 1820s. Though it is questionable whether the novels were as popular as Edward Bulwer Lytton claimed in hindsight ('novels of fashionable life were read by all classes, in every town, in every village'), they did receive a lot of attention in the press and were 'an enormously profitable enterprise' with prices ranging from 10s to the handsome sum of 1 guinea.¹²⁶ For our purposes, these novels can be seen to open up the discourse on what good or desirable manners and etiquette were further. They also foreshadowed the etiquette manual, as they depict in fictional form the kinds of social interaction that etiquette writers would later go on to dissect into precise guide rules.

Catherine Gore's silver fork novel *Women as They Are* (1830) for example received the praise that 'altogether this work forms a *moving panorama* of the manners of the day'.¹²⁷ Gore for example poignantly described the rise of the parvenu:

The original cause of this universal apparition, the latent merit which could give vogue to a man of low extraction, and vulgar habits, will generally find a parvenu of the class in question to be what is termed a useful man; – endowed with moderate abilities and great subserviency; who will lend an active pen and an untiring voice to any cause wherein he may be profitably retained; – drilled temper can endure and forget a passing insult; and who brings to the table of his patron the news of the day, and a pun or two of moderate merit, in return for a cutlet and a soufflé. A being of this pliant character, once favoured by an auspicious opening into society, is sure of rising to its highest point.¹²⁸

Her waspish account details close to life how a 'vulgar' can get access to fashionable society by being 'subservient', useful and 'well-drilled' on how to behave.

Silver fork novels generally reflected the etiquette developments in London society very closely. Lady Blessington, to name one example, the author of numerous silver fork novels herself, also featured as a character in fellow writer Rosina Bulwer Lytton's viciously retributive *roman-à-clef*

¹²⁶ Edward Bulwer, *England and the English* (London: 1833), p. 252; and Edward Copeland, *The Silver Fork Novel: Fashionable Fiction in the Age of Reform*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 19.

¹²⁷ 'Catherine Gore's *Women As They Are*' in: *Morning Post*, 11th of February 1830, quoted in: Copeland, *The Silver Fork Novel*, p. 10.

¹²⁸ Catherine Gore, *Women as They Are; or The Manners of the Day*, III vols (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), II, p. 5.

Cheveley (1839).¹²⁹ Authors were not shy to attach their real names and often handsomely elaborate portraits in the frontispiece to support the authenticity of their portraits of high society—even where, as in the case of Rosina Lytton, the portrait was evidently distorted by a personal agenda. By contrast, the discourse of etiquette was treated as something that one would rather not attach one's name to and use a pseudonym for the same effect.

Most silver fork novelists concentrated on the 'Season', a period of several months each calendar year, when great balls were held, elaborate dinners planned, and introductions at court prepared. It was a time during which fashionableness and 'good' behaviour in social circles were of the utmost importance. The Season was followed eagerly not only by Londoners but also by a wider print audience. The landed gentry either returned from the provinces to their London residences or rented property for the purpose, while those less well connected and affluent could follow the goings-on in detailed newspaper articles. 'The closing of the London season constitute[d]', not only the end of most silver fork novels, but also, 'for the fashionable world, the grand crisis of the year', proclaims the narrator of Catherine Gore's *The Débutante* (1846).¹³⁰ Silver fork fiction generally presented an illustration of what was considered 'fashionable' or 'refined' during this most exclusive London Season. *The English Ladies' Costume* (1811), to name one example, included chapters on 'the female form' or 'the detail of dress', which advised the reader on what to wear and the manners associated with certain clothing, very much foreshadowing the kind of discourse soon to be found in etiquette manuals, although it did not necessarily want to encourage those of lower standing to attempt to emulate this, unlike later guides.

Silver fork novels opened up fashionable society and elite circles in a new way, as they were a way of looking behind the previously inaccessible scenes. While other novels equally shed light on the upper classes, they were not as explicit in their descriptions of the actual day-to-day life as

¹²⁹ Susanne Schmid, *British Literary Salons of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Nineteenth Century Major Lives and Letters (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 159.

¹³⁰ Catherine Gore, *The Débutante* (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1861) p. 1.

well as the Season and authors did not have the status most silver fork writers carried. Hughes finds, for example, that in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray was rather 'toying with the reader's desire to penetrate that inner sanctum, while flaunting his own lack of inside information and offering only comic frustration'.¹³¹ Silver fork authors, by contrast, held an implicit 'contract' with their readers on the basis of 'the claim that they knew exclusive society as active participants'.¹³²

The popularity of silver fork novels demonstrably led their most successful publisher to see the commercial promise in volumes purely consisting of advice on manners. Henry Colburn was the primary publisher of silver fork novels; when their popularity subsided in the mid-1840s, Colburn's publishing house switched focus to concentrate instead on etiquette manuals. Marjorie Morgan has similarly come to the conclusion that it was silver fork novels which 'helped contemporary publishers to see there was money to be made dispensing fashionable jabbers to middle-class-folk', which is exactly what etiquette creators exploited.¹³³

Readers of Etiquette: Eager Disciples or Desperate Victorians?

In the preface to *Behaviour: A Manual of Manners and Morals* (1874), etiquette author and medical practitioner Thomas Low Nichols (1815-1901) wrote of etiquette manuals that 'the supply has been in some proportion to the demand' and that 'the demand shows a very laudable desire for improvement in the deportment, graces and accomplishments which give a charm to society'.¹³⁴ It is a claim that paints the readers of etiquette in a favourable and almost altruistic light. Almost

¹³¹ Winifred Hughes, 'Silver Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller' In: *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1992), pp. 328-347 (p. 331).

¹³² Copeland, *The Silver Fork Novel*, p. 15.

¹³³ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 25.

¹³⁴ Thomas Low Nichols, *Behaviour: A Manual of Manners and Morals* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), p. viii.

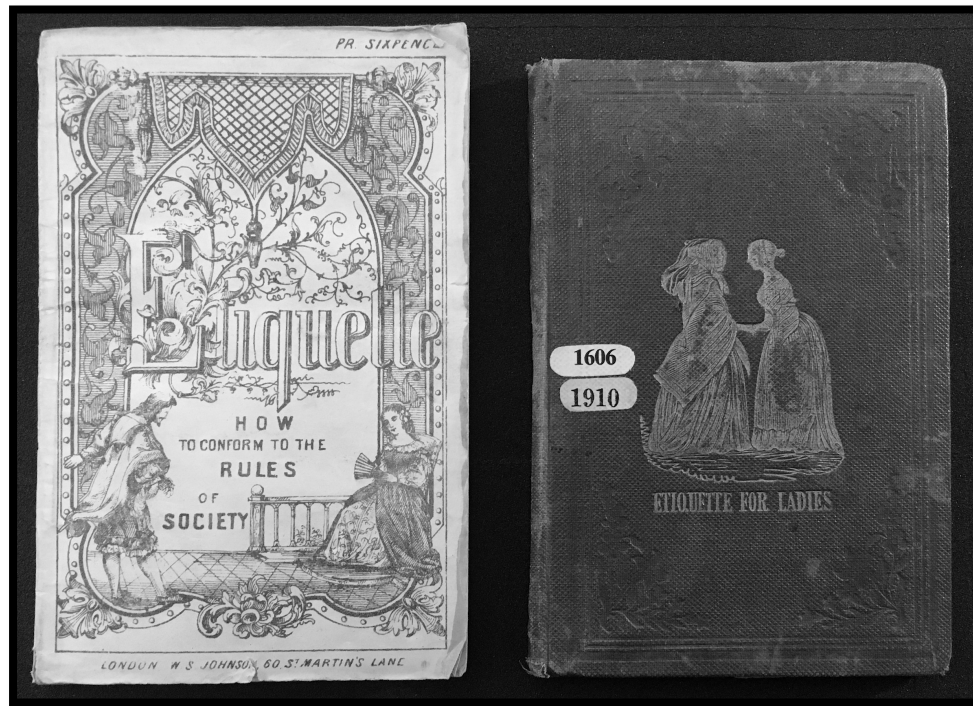
forty years prior, in a review of recently published etiquette manuals for *The Quarterly* in 1837, Abraham Hayward, son of a landed gentleman turned journalist, presented a completely different view of the readers of etiquette: ‘the demand for this sort of trash’, he claimed, ‘betokened an unworthy and degrading eagerness on the part of a large part of the community to learn how lords and ladies ate, drank, dressed, and coquetted and cull maxims of taste and gentility from the tawdry slipslop’.¹³⁵ Such eagerness, in Hayward’s opinion, did not stem from the wish for self-improvement for its own sake, but from the ‘vulgar’ aim to assume parity with gentlemen such as himself.

The two authors imagined the readership of etiquette literature in sharply contrasting ways: with Nichols painting them as disciples eager to improve and Hayward construing them as desperate vulgarians looking to climb the social ladder. In all likelihood, neither Nichols nor Hayward hit the mark in their description of etiquette readers. Gathered sources of information about 19th-century reading habits, including David Vincent’s *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, Richard Altick’s *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, or the *Reading Experience Database* offer disappointingly little information about readers of etiquette manuals.¹³⁶ The material evidence of etiquette manuals, however, offers some sense of *how* they were meant to be consumed and of what actual practices they were subject to. Though the manuals took a variety of formats and sizes (as I will describe in more detail in Chapter III), the most common format of an etiquette guide was the palm-sized, clothbound, thin volume, measuring a mere nine by six centimetres (3.5 x 2.3 inches), like the manuals in figures 1 and 2 exemplify. Though kept in small print, the individual rules are divided by multiple line spaces so that it is possible to find and read a specific rule quickly and easily. This meant that they could be

¹³⁵ Abraham Hayward, ‘Codes of Manners and Etiquette’ (*The Quarterly*, 1837), pp. 395–439 (p. 397).

¹³⁶ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 19 (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, 2nd ed (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

used as reference guides, to be consulted ad hoc when in need of advice. These indicators suggest that most works of etiquette were not considered coffee table material but read in the manner of a practical guide – selectively, and perhaps even secretly, as the palm-sized format, perfect for discreet consultation, suggests.



Two pocket guides:

Fig. 1 Cover of *Etiquette. How to Conform to the Rules of Society: A Complete Exponent of Propriety of Manner in All the Usages of Society, Manners, and Accomplishments* (London: W. S. Johnson, 1852) (left)

Fig. 2 Cover of *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints on the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (London: Blanchard, 1841) (right)

Another important indicator was that etiquette literature was meant to be owned, not borrowed. Neither (circulating) libraries nor book-lenders included etiquette manuals in their catalogues. The flimsy nature of the small pocket guides in part prevented this and their affordable price (on average sixpence) encouraged buying. Etiquette literature was part of the contemporary trend that David Vincent sees booming from the 1840s onwards which saw a great rise in the

possession of ephemeral secular literature.¹³⁷ Whereas before 1830 the scope of family libraries might have only extended itself to ‘a few chap-books, the odd volume of travel and exploration, a few old newspapers and journals’ (the rest being composed of religious texts), the number of secular works in households grew exponentially over the coming decades.¹³⁸ This trend surely supported and encouraged publishers to choose the more ephemeral pocket-format for their guides to enable this kind of *sub rosa* usage, like that of the ‘country girl’ described in *The Habits of Good Society* who ‘carries a little book of etiquette under her fan into the ballroom’.¹³⁹ Both the small size and vulnerability to loss of the guides and their intended functionality help to explain the silence on the genre of major reading evidence databases and existing scholarship.

Another factor influencing what we know about the consumption of etiquette literature was its reputation. ‘Some captious critics’ (as the affronted author of *Etiquette for All* [1861] called them) of etiquette manuals straightforwardly ‘question[ed] the necessity of such books as th[ese], and sneer[ed] at the seeming shams which people practice in society’.¹⁴⁰ As we have seen earlier, ‘highbrow’ publications such as *The Quarterly Review* were especially harsh critics of etiquette manuals with Abraham Hayward describing etiquette manuals as ‘trash’ filled with ‘absurdities’.¹⁴¹ John Wilson Croker, politician and essayist, likewise unfavourably reviewed a new addition to the genre in 1839: Harriet Martineau’s *How to Observe Manners and Morals* (1838). In his article, Wilson launches into a remorseless attack on ‘Miss Martineau’s scrap-book’: ‘the very foolishest and most unfeminine farrago we have ever met of apocryphal anecdotes, promiscuous facts, and jumbled ideas—picked at random (or at least which might be so) out of the Penny Magazine and such

¹³⁷ David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography*, University Paperbacks, 790 (London ; New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 111.

¹³⁸ Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom*, p. 110.

¹³⁹ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 23.

¹⁴⁰ *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (Glasgow: George Watson, 1861) p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Hayward, ‘Codes of Manners and Etiquette’, p. 397.

repositories'.¹⁴² The prejudice is clear: etiquette manuals and the ill-conceived social ambition they are furthering to be condemned and, in Wilson's words, had guided Britain into the 'vulgar era of 1835'.¹⁴³

On occasion, the genre of etiquette might be defended: an injured respondent fired back at *The Quarterly* in 1859 that 'if the heavy-headed essayists of a Quarterly want a light subject to relieve the tedium of their trimes-trial lucubrations, it is almost sure to be the vade mecums of etiquette which come in for their satire'.¹⁴⁴ The general consensus in the press was closer (though not as harsh) to the reviews in *The Quarterly*, making it understandable why readers would not readily admit to consuming etiquette literature (and also why writers continued to hide behind pseudonyms). Ironically, this was a literature that aimed to save its readers from embarrassment, yet reading it was itself considered embarrassing.

By comparison, other self-improving literature did not carry the same stigma that etiquette manuals did. Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859) was for example not only published by the reputable John Murray, but was included among the libraries of respected minds such as Charles Darwin who even personally thanked Smiles for sending him a copy of his book which was published in the same year as his *Origin of Species*.¹⁴⁵ It seems that it was not embarrassment about the 'self-help'-genre as such which condemned etiquette literature to semi-illicit consumption, but rather what was characterised as calculating, self-profiteering narrative stripped of any moral concerns. Leslie Howsam notes how 'readers' interpretations are formed partly by the text, but also partly by the elements imposed on a book by its design and by the conventions of the genre, and partly too by

¹⁴² Croker John Wilson, 'Miss Martineau's Morals and Manners', *The Quarterly Review*, January 1839, Volume 62 Issue 125, pp. 61–75 (72).

¹⁴³ Wilson, 'Miss Martineau's Morals and Manners', p. 61.

¹⁴⁴ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Darwin, Frederick Burkhardt, and Sydney Smith, *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 71, p. 78.

the vagaries of individual and collective consciousness'.¹⁴⁶ It can therefore be concluded that not only content and format influenced how readers used these books, but also etiquette manuals' peculiarly stigmatised reputation.

Still, etiquette manuals were sold in great numbers. Sales figures and editions help estimate the range of etiquette manuals and (though very roughly) the size of readership. Referring back to St Clair, deductions from these kinds of data are possible and can give a valuable indication of how their popularity compared to that of other literature of the time.¹⁴⁷ William Day's *Hints on Etiquette* (1834), for example sold 12,000 copies between 1834 and 1837, roughly averaging 4,000 copies per year. This number served as evidence in court for the 'considerable profit' that the publication had accrued when its publisher and author were fighting another publication that had infringed its copyright.¹⁴⁸ At least in this case, it is therefore a number that can be trusted. Assuming that some of the purchasers also passed on the manual to someone else, as was custom at this point in time the figure of readership for this particular manual lies somewhere between 12,000 and 18,000 during the first three years after publication.¹⁴⁹ To put this number into context: London, where the manual appeared and against whose backdrop it was set, had a population of 1.87 million at that stage, not counting children and assuming a literacy rate of 60 per cent, one more or less reaches a number just shy of half a million readers. Percentagewise, (the more conservative) 12,000 out of 500,000 is therefore a sizeable portion of people who would have come into contact with this particular manual in a three year period.¹⁵⁰

Though it can of course not be assumed that everyone who purchased or was passed on the

¹⁴⁶ Leslie Howsam, 'What Is The Historiography Of Books? Recent Studies In Authorship, Publishing, And Reading In Modern Britain And North America', *The Historical Journal*, 51.4 (2008), 1089–1101 (p. 1090) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X08007206>>.

¹⁴⁷ St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 185.

¹⁴⁸ 'Hints on Etiquette - Injunction', *The Globe*, 14 July 1837. [Report of the case Whittaker vs. Day]

¹⁴⁹ See: Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*.

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion of literacy rates, which has informed the number used here, see: David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Themes in History (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2000).

manual also read its contents cover to cover or at all, the numbers still indicate that this text alone already had a considerable audience. A quick comparison of popular works in other markets show that etiquette manuals had an equally substantial market and sizeable target audience. Scott's Waverley novels for example sold 11,500 copies at seven shillings each to a much more privileged audience over a span of seven years into the 1820s, while Dickens' more affordable monthly publications of *Dombey and Son* (1846-1848) sold 32,000 copies per monthly issue.¹⁵¹ Overall, what these comparative numbers tell us is that the appetite for etiquette manuals was sizeable.

Other manuals certainly tried to convey the impression of a large following – *Etiquette for the Ladies: Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments* was first published in the mid-1830s, reached its 4th edition in 1837 and, impressively if true, its 33rd edition in 1846.¹⁵² Similarly, *Hints on Etiquette* continued to be reprinted frequently, reaching its 26th edition by 1849. Even if these numbers were exaggerated, this marketing speaks to the fact that the etiquette manual business was flourishing as well as competitive and could be part of a strategy to convince readers of the popularity of a specific manual and induce them to buy it.

In terms of experience of the actual readers, inscriptions in manuals themselves are the only surviving signs which allow a glimpse at how manuals were read and used in practical terms. A copy of *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints on the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (1838) which belonged to a Miss Anne M. Smith, held at the British Library, for example, allows valuable insights into the relationship between a piece of etiquette literature and its reader, through the marginalia. Particularly interesting is Miss Smith's engagement with the preface, in which she underlined the section directed from author to reader and practitioner of etiquette and writes her own name above it, signalling that she is the 'intelligent reader' with dedication to learn who the

¹⁵¹ Simon Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Deirdre David, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 37–60 (p. 37, p. 44) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521641500.003>>.

¹⁵² *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837); and *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 33rd edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1846).

author is addressing.¹⁵³ Throughout the rest of the manual, Miss Smith occasionally underlined sections, seemingly those which were particularly relevant to her circumstances or advice which she deemed useful and potentially hoped to apply. For example, the section on animals seems to have interested her and the rule that dogs should not be taken on calls is underlined. Lap dogs were still a relatively new fashion and not wholly common, so the fact that Miss Smith consulted the etiquette manual for something she was unsure about shows that they were indeed a source of advice to readers (though whether Miss Smith actually adhered to the rule is another matter).¹⁵⁴ Even though such evidence is rare, Miss Smith's traces of usage nonetheless allow for speculation that at least some readers were hoping for practical application of what they read.

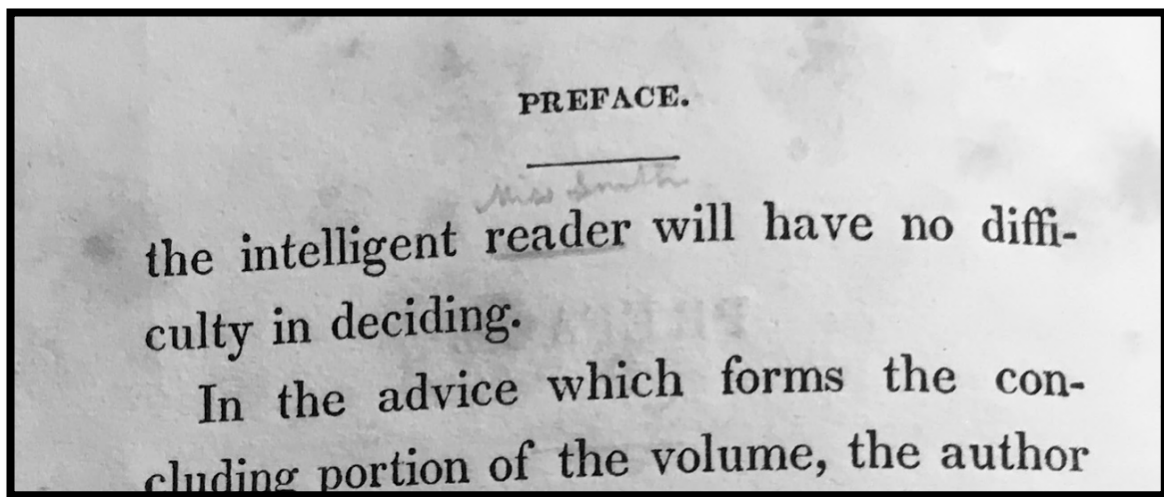


Fig. 3 Marginalia in *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints On the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838) p. ii.

¹⁵³ *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints On the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838) p. ii.

¹⁵⁴ Marginalia in *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints On the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty*. p. 43. Held at the British Library.

Most manuals projected a clear image of the kind of reader expected. Readers were portrayed less as the self-improvers of the Samuel Smiles-ilk and more as social aspirants, ready to move up the social ladder and take their place among respectable society. Prefaces were generally where authors made the most explicit reference to their ‘imagined reader’ and are the most helpful source where readers were explicitly addressed and identified. *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1881) is a good example of the double-edged dedications most etiquette manuals employed. The author, who calls himself the ‘Lounger in Society’, initially directs his manual broadly at

everybody who desires to obtain a general survey of the art (or science) of etiquette, and to refresh his memory with the leading principles of social culture [...The book] is intended for both sexes and for all ages, as well as for all classes of society.¹⁵⁵

Only a few sentences later, he qualifies this statement and targets more specific audiences: the manual, he writes, ‘will be found as useful by the habitu   of the Mayfair drawing-room, as by the neophyte who, with beating heart, aspires to soar above the commonplaces of Bloomsbury’ – suggesting, or conceding at last, that the manual may be most helpful either to the ‘quiet middle-class family whose ambition is restricted to an “evening party” once a year’ or to the ‘upper-class family whose members are “presented at court”’.¹⁵⁶ The implied addressee is strongly upper class and upper middle-class, particularly suggesting those among these classes who had the ‘desire’ to ‘soar’.

But this imagined reader outlined in the prefaces to etiquette manuals often drastically clashes with what is implied by the text of these manuals. It is likely that the portrayal of this imagined reader in the preface was part of the larger framework that authors used to establish legitimacy. After all, a manual which purported to be written by one of the elite and supposedly was read by an educated, wealthy class appeared self-evidently more credible and worth buying than one written by someone who might themselves be considered an aspirant to high society.

¹⁵⁵ *The Glass of Fashion*, p. vi.

¹⁵⁶ *The Glass of Fashion*, p. vi.

Additionally, as we have seen above, far more copies of etiquette manuals were sold than individuals existed who realistically had the means to imitate what was portrayed and advised in them, meaning that the authors must have been aware of their actual readership, yet employing the mechanism of constructing the reader as elite was part of the genre.

Looking again at the linguistic construction of the text itself can perhaps indeed bring us closer to a more realistic idea of the actual readers of etiquette manuals. Etiquette literature was written in short pragmatic phrases that often began with an imperative, such as ‘Never put your knife in your mouth’.¹⁵⁷ On the one hand, this asserted the authority of the writer, but on the other, it made the rules easy to comprehend and apply. Authors hardly ever embellished more than necessary, and individual chapters mostly consisted of a string of barely connected paragraphs that each list and explain one rule, such as in the extract from *Etiquette for Ladies* (1841) below:

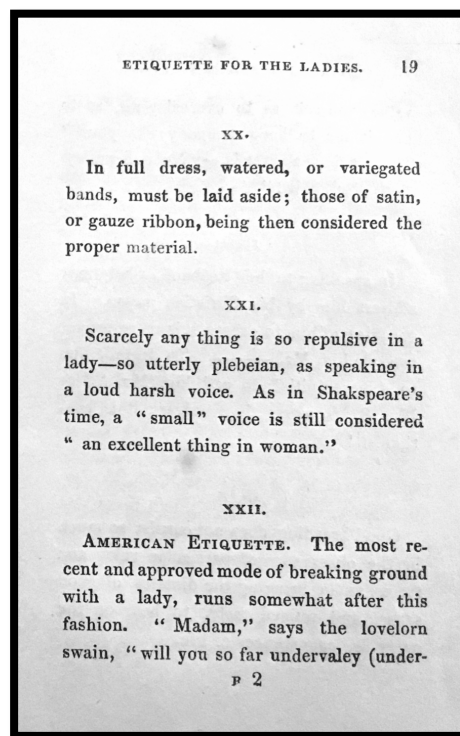


Fig. 4 *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints On the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (London: Blanchard, 1841), p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 24.

This shortness and simplicity can be read not only as efficiency of practice, but could also hint at a less educated, potentially lower-middle-class readership. As we have already determined, etiquette manuals were a genre that asked to be read silently; listening to a public performance or others' reading out loud was most likely not an option. Even though literacy had rapidly increased and expanded into the lower classes, this at the same time did not mean that everyone could read a large volume of elaborately phrased text. This was not because readers lacked such ability, but also, as Altick suggested, due to the lack of leisure time they could (or wanted to) allocate to reading.¹⁵⁸ Buying and reading a book was even at points seen as a missed opportunity: entertainment became more affordable (saver day trips by rail, special days with lower admission prices, or larger scale performances and concerts), so that there were more options to choose from when deciding what to devote one's precious free time to and how to spend the money allocated to it.¹⁵⁹

Etiquette's target audiences were not those of an aristocratic background – the true aristocrat was assumed not to need such guidance, being more or less well acculturated to the rules of good conduct from birth. To explore further the suggestion that etiquette literature quite possibly was written for lower-middle-class readers, I want to return to Abraham Hayward's hostile review of etiquette literature for the *Quarterly*. Hayward's review can be taken as indicative of how someone of the upper classes might have perceived etiquette manuals. Kate Flint has highlighted the importance of 'exercis[ing] a certain amount of caution when using autobiographical material' due to its element of self-fashioning.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, special attention has to be paid to the impression Hayward wanted his readers to attain of him through his harsh critique. Still, Abraham Hayward is the only traceable upper-class individual to have publicly reviewed etiquette manuals and

¹⁵⁸ According to Altick, mainly more well-to-do members of the middle-classes had a greater luxury of time that they could devote to reading, as at the lower levels of society, fourteen to sixteen hour working days were all but uncommon, leaving little opportunity for the leisurely pursuit of reading. In: Altick, *The English Common Reader*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁵⁹ Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing', p. 40.

¹⁶⁰ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837 - 1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 187.

analysing his article is a rare opportunity of insight into the impressions an educated readership might have formed.

Hayward (1801-1884) was an educated well-off political writer. His father belonged to the landed gentry, and he himself had established a life in London as a journalist, hobby politician and member of the prestigious Athenaeum club, where he remained a well-connected and influential member for almost fifty years. His translation of Faust opened the doors to the elite salons of Europe to him, and his excellent conversational talents saw him invited to the most exclusive dinner parties in London, where he made friends with the likes of William Makepeace Thackeray, W. E. Gladstone, Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, and Prince Louis Bonaparte.¹⁶¹

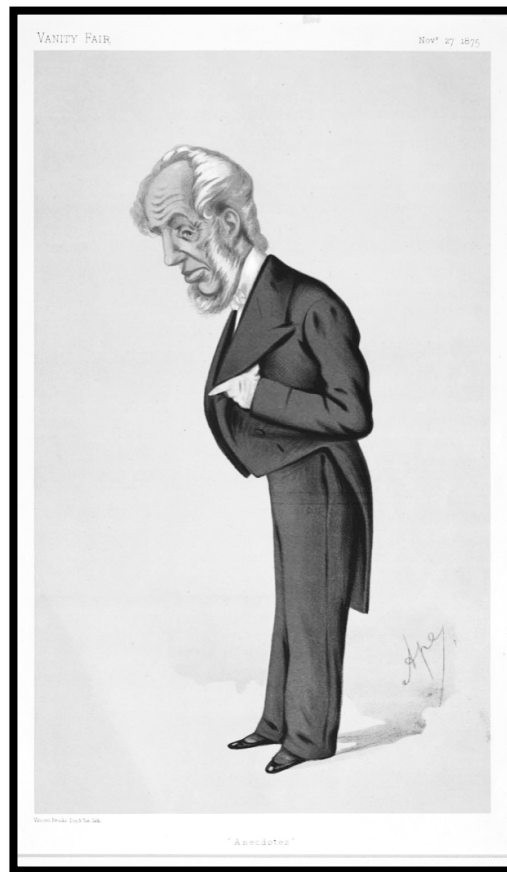


Fig. 5 Ape, Men of the Day No.117: Caricature of Mr A. Hayward, published in Vanity Fair, 1875. Caption: 'Anecdotes'.

¹⁶¹ Philip Harling, 'Hayward, Abraham (1801-1884)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12793>> [accessed 10 November 2018].

Hayward would most certainly not have needed guidance in behaviour or table manners as he would have been raised in a very similar social context to that described in the manuals and his *curriculum vitae* demonstrates his considerable social accomplishments. Etiquette manuals were specifically written in a way so that no previous knowledge was needed. Authors took great care to make sure that even a reader who never had been to a private dinner party or even an upper middle-class family or aristocratic home at all could understand and imagine the particulars by supplying the necessary details. It is thus hardly surprising that Hayward thought so little of etiquette manuals, as he did not see a personal need for them, and his intellectual interests drew him to much more sophisticated forms of literature. Hayward can be taken as exemplary of how many privileged readers would have reacted to etiquette works. Perhaps as a personal response to etiquette manuals, Hayward in fact authored *The Art of Dining* (1852), a dense 150-page tract on the history of dining, filled with intellectual discussion about ‘gastronomic effects’, as well as skilfully embellished personal anecdotes. It could be that Hayward saw this as an example of how the elite wanted to be informed of the art of dining—a form of alternative to etiquette writers’ narrowly-defined ambitions also reflected in his choice of publishing house, the traditional and conservative John Murray, who never published a single work on etiquette.

Yet this is not to say that readership of etiquette was exclusively limited to a lower middle class or working-class demographic. After all, there were also larger volumes, richly decorated and expensive enough to place them out of reach of lower income households. Etiquette writers sometimes suggested that members of upper-class society were on occasion reading their manuals in order to entertain and amuse themselves, to see what an author claimed to be fashionable or simply to educate themselves on particular etiquette. The author of *Manners and Rules of Good Society* (1879), a thick cloth-bound volume with gild edges and engravings, for example recognises a multitude of reading purposes when introducing the concept of etiquette:

Some people read everything that is written on the subject of etiquette, not only those who are ignorant and wish to learn something of its laws, but those who are thoroughly well versed in them and who, one might suppose, had nothing to learn; still these latter like

to see what is written, to feel the satisfaction of being supported in their own knowledge by a well-informed writer; or finding amusement by someone writing from another sphere than that where *savoir vivre* reigns.¹⁶²

The existence of those fancier manuals, although there are perhaps no more than a dozen different ones in my sample of about one hundred manuals, indicates that etiquette manuals found readers in the upper classes, although the text was more sophisticated and tailored to their needs.

The previous quotation from *Manners and Rules of Good Society* also opens up the question of why individuals read etiquette manuals. Amusement and escapism, as well as a ‘looking through the keyhole’ must have motivated some readers. Curiosity about the lives of the upper classes could indeed have been a strong draw, as David Vincent picks up in a recent study of what he terms the Victorian ‘spirit of inquiry’. ‘Curiosity’, Vincent writes, had ‘spread into all kinds of media’: ‘Inquiry was a form of entertainment. Curiosity underpinned a proliferating consumer market in the nineteenth century. It sold tracts, miscellanies, newspapers, images, plays, and novels to an increasingly literate population’.¹⁶³ Curiosity was also what Abraham Hayward diagnosed in 1837 when he talked about the ‘unworthy and degrading eagerness’ of people who wanted to gain insights into aristocratic circles.¹⁶⁴ As we will see in greater detail in Chapter III, emotional manipulation – whether in a positive or negative way – was a common mechanism of the literature. Etiquette authors tended to direct themselves to those ‘ambitious youth’, eager for guidance and animated by the fear that, without knowledge of etiquette, one would be excluded from society.¹⁶⁵ In the manuals, the practice of etiquette was often treated as a ticket of admission, as well as a guarantee for success: ‘with it, you are at princely ease, without it, you are in loutish embarrassment’, writes one etiquette writer, clearly playing on the fears of those looking to succeed

¹⁶² ‘A Member of the Aristocracy’, *Manners and Rules of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 15th Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1888), p. 2.

¹⁶³ David Vincent, *I Hope I Don’t Intrude: Privacy and Its Dilemmas in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 117-118.

¹⁶⁴ Hayward, ‘Codes of Manners and Etiquette’, p. 397.

¹⁶⁵ Mentor, *Always: A Manual of Etiquette for the Guidance of Either Sex into the Empurpled Penetralia of Fashionable Life* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1884), p. 3.

socially.¹⁶⁶ The reality was indeed probably a complex mix or middle ground between different objectives, with some readers hoping to get to know the intricacies of an aristocratic lifestyle, while reading more instrumentally to pick up a useful hint or two. While there is evidence that people identified with what they read, there at the same time is evidence that people did not take etiquette seriously at all, which voices itself in the various critiques and satires that appeared throughout the Victorian Age, most notably by the likes of Thackeray or Carroll, but also proliferating in the penny press.

Servants constituted a possible, albeit smaller group of readers. They were often responsible for the smooth running of the sorts of social event discussed in the manuals. Theresa McBride in fact argues that servants were not only necessary commodities and status symbols to the middle-classes by the mid-nineteenth century, but also that their command of etiquette was crucial to their labour, so that the best servants achieved a similar level of formality to that of upper-class society.¹⁶⁷ It was therefore crucial not only to behave correctly, but also to know the intricacies of the running of a respectable household. There was, however, only a very limited number of manuals directly addressed to servants, which mainly appeared in the late nineteenth century, such as John Bell's *The Servant's Guide* (1895) series, which purports to be 'culled from personal experience' and which did however not exclusively discuss etiquette, but also recipes or instructions for cleaning hunting equipment.¹⁶⁸ Yet even popular etiquette manuals sometimes made implicit reference to 'the help'. In a chapter on 'Morning Calls', the author of *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided* (1879) spends two whole pages detailing the movements of the servant during morning calls. For example, 'if the visitor does not give his or her name [...] the servant, if he does not know it, would say to the visitor, "What name, if you

¹⁶⁶ Mentor, *Always*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 18.

¹⁶⁸ See for example: John Bell, *The Servant's Guide. A Series of Practical Recipes, Etc.* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1895).

please, ma'am?" and upon being told, he would open the drawing-room door *without knocking*.¹⁶⁹ The instructions are implicitly directed at the servant, or to the lady of the house instructing him or her beforehand, as the lady of the house herself would already be in the drawing-room and not be exposed to this interaction. Later on, the manual describes how the hostess should instruct servants at, for example, a luncheon or dinner party. A manual could thus not only be given to literate servants, but it also facilitated their training by their employers.

The concise and pragmatic language of the etiquette genre could, indeed, be reproduced verbatim by the mistress of the house, making it easier for the upwardly mobile lady to delegate potentially unfamiliar tasks. Not only servants could be instructed and taught in this way, but also those with responsibility for younger members of the family. In its preface, *Manners and Tone of Good Society* explicitly addresses household employees of higher standing: 'those having the charge of young ladies before their introduction into society, either mothers, chaperones, or governesses, will also derive much useful and practical information from the perusal of this work'.¹⁷⁰

In conclusion, the readership of etiquette was certainly not monolithic or confined to a particular class, gender or occupation. The richness in formats suggests a more diverse readership than expected and individual manuals give hints at whom they were directing themselves to. The absence of a rich record of reading experience is indicative of a history of practical use, probably erratic engagement, and (certainly) low valuation on the part of libraries, museums and collectors until fairly recently. The linguistic construction of the text nevertheless tells a story of imagined readers.

¹⁶⁹ *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. 24.

¹⁷⁰ *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. xi.

The Writers of Etiquette: Money-makers or Social Reformers?

The identity of the authors of etiquette literature is in the main just as elusive as that of its readers. For the most part, etiquette manuals were published anonymously or under pseudonyms, so that only very little information is traceable today. While remuneration receipts in archives and the speculations of contemporary commentators can help to unearth some information about writers, most of the time the pseudonym is all that is left of the author. Yet the choice to anonymise the manuals also has the potential to inform us about the reception of and expectations toward the genre and its writers.

The ‘typical’ etiquette writer persona – a character, or a social type, that the majority of authors adopted, or hid behind – was a vague term such as ‘A Member of the Aristocracy’, ‘Countess of *****’, ‘The Lounger in Society’, or ‘A Lady of Rank’. Few authors troubled themselves with a more specific persona, perhaps because the limited space of pocketbooks did not allow it but more likely because mere gesturalism toward social position was an advantage. Hidden behind a pseudonym, the writer was protected from judgements about how well equipped they were, or were not, to be issuing advice to others. Any insights into the behaviour of the fashionable classes had, moreover, something of the air of discrete social espionage. *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1859) provides a rare example of an author who shares an elaborate story of the circumstances which brought him to write a manual more extensive than most, which almost had a novelistic quality to it. He called himself ‘The Man in the Club Window’ and claimed to be a gentleman struggling with an illness which confined him to sitting in a chair in ‘one of the best’ London clubs. This gave him time to observe not only the goings-on inside the club, but also those of the surrounding neighbourhood which boasts a ‘well-patronized circulating library certainly more old-fashioned than Mr Mudie’s’ and which is favoured

by ‘certain classes’.¹⁷¹ Unable to participate, the writer-narrator sets himself up as compelled to make use of his situation to help those less fortunately placed socially, and to distract himself from loneliness. By establishing oneself as a marginal and watchful member of exclusive London society or its selective clubs, ‘The Man in the Club Window’ or ‘The Lounger in Society’ meant to appeal to readers, as figures promising not only to solve the mysteries of upper-class behaviour, but also give access to goings-on within the elusive world of the club.

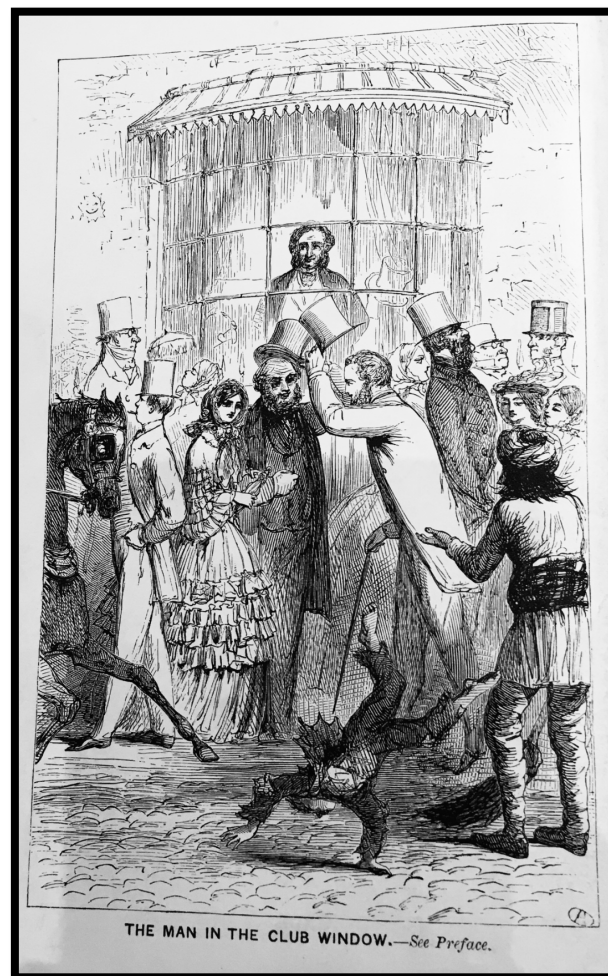


Fig. 6 Illustration ‘The Man in the Club Window’ In: *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. iii.

¹⁷¹ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 11-12.

Stories such as these demonstrate that even though etiquette manuals made few demands in terms of literary proficiency, they assume a desire for a certain degree of authenticity from their writers. For pocketbooks, which, as we have seen, probably had a lower middle-class readership judging from price and format, it seems that the standard solution of a front-page claim to the author's gentility or aristocracy was mostly sufficient: 'One of Rank', 'A Lady', (more cagily) 'An Exclusive'. For more elaborate, pricier volumes such as *The Habits of Good Society* (1859) or the similarly framed *Mixing in Society* (1870), a more extensive backstory of the author was warranted.

Whether or not these pseudonyms and backstories in most cases reflected the real situation of the writers is unclear and often impossible to retrace today. Already in the 1830s and 1840s, there had been speculation about pretentious claims of authorship by etiquette manuals: Abraham Hayward's cynical suggestion was that etiquette writings were most likely to be 'drawn up by artists, captains of the militia, stock-brokers' and, worst of all, 'dancing masters'.¹⁷² Being well versed in court matters and dancing, dance masters were frequent visitors to upper class households, employed to prepare daughters for their 'coming out' or to teach a new fashionable dance. Some established dancing masters brought out pamphlets in similar formats to the etiquette manual, one example being *The Ball-Room Manual, and Etiquette of Dancing* (1867) by J. Seaton and 'Professor of Dancing' Henry Bland, though these guides focused exclusively on dancing and ballroom routines, largely omitting social conduct. The dancing master had long been a disquieting figure – allowed intimate physical contact with the daughters of the house, almost always strictly supervised. Left *unsupervised*, he was open to the suspicion of looking to corrupt them. Molly Engelhardt speaks of dancing masters as 'sexual suspects' whose 'seriousness' in their job was 'coupled with signs of effeminacy', which made them 'subjects of humor' as well as condemnable on multiple levels.¹⁷³ Hayward's suggestion that dancing masters might be behind some etiquette manuals was thus a

¹⁷² Hayward, 'Codes of Manners and Etiquette', p. 397.

¹⁷³ Molly Engelhardt, *Dancing out of Line: Ballrooms, Ballets, and Mobility in Victorian Fiction and Culture* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), p. 32-33.

blatant slur, implying that etiquette guides were as capable of corrupting the mind as dancing masters were of seducing the body.

Michael Curtin argues that the majority of etiquette authors were non-aristocratic and financially motivated. He goes on: ‘thoughtful authors did not write etiquette manuals [...] the genre was not a vehicle for self-expression or moral crusading’.¹⁷⁴ The relatively uncomplicated nature of the genre’s textual contents and its ready marketability were quite likely an attraction for many etiquette writers. Indeed, there was also good money to be made from writing an etiquette guide. For the three pocket guides *Etiquette of Courtship*, *Etiquette for Ladies*, and *Etiquette for Gentlemen*, Routledge for example remunerated the author (a Mr Raynham) with a sum of twenty-five pounds and one shilling in 1863 and promised him further assignment.¹⁷⁵ For a larger, more elaborate volume like *Good Society*, the publishing house paid the authoress (an Amelia B. Edwards) one hundred and twenty-five pounds in 1857.¹⁷⁶ The financial incentives of etiquette writing were therefore strong and surely the main motivation of many authors. Yet, as will be seen in the final part of this chapter, there were also exceptions. Thomas Low Nichols and Emily Shirreff, two of the authors we will get to know more in the following section, deployed etiquette-instruction in the larger context of their respective fields of social reform writing.

Elizabeth Langland has recently argued in ‘Women’s Writing and the Domestic Sphere’ (2001) that ‘the majority of writers [...] were principally women [...] who were only too glad to claim authorship’, as they hoped to use these guides as ‘an avenue to publication’.¹⁷⁷ Langland unfortunately does not supply sources or additional material to support this claim, and it is open to immediate question given that there are many male writers known at least by name, such as Day

¹⁷⁴ Curtin, *Propriety and Position*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁵ ‘November 27th, 1863’. In: ‘Contract Book R-Z 1853-1873’, Routledge Archive, The National Archives, UCL006447, p. 67.

¹⁷⁶ ‘1857’. In: ‘Contract Book A-H 1853-1873’, Routledge Archive, The National Archives, UCL006446, p. 320.

¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Langland, ‘Women’s Writing and the Domestic Sphere’, in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1800-1900*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 119–41 (p. 124).

or Nichols. Langland furthermore seems to ignore the stigma that accompanied etiquette tracts at the time, assuming that the writer's gender was the sole hindrance that led to guides being published anonymously or under a pseudonym.

While it is thus impossible to find completely trustworthy information about authorship from contemporary critical and historical sources, one can turn to the history of writing anonymously, which paradoxically can tell us more about the reception and expectations of the etiquette genre. The fact that authors chose to remain anonymous is consistent with criticisms of the genre that circulated at the time, and which presumptively made attaching one's name to an etiquette manual something to think twice about. The author of *Mixing in Society* thus laments: 'Few would care to write upon so trite a subject [...] because an unmerited ridicule has hitherto attached to books of etiquette'.¹⁷⁸

Writing etiquette could also have other social ramifications. The author of *Court Etiquette* (1849) for example complains that 'to write a treatise in etiquette is to be condemned everlastingly in the region of tailors, ladies-maids, and parvenus', alluding to the financial incentive manual writing provided.¹⁷⁹ While etiquette could on one hand be enabling for the reader, it could, it seems, be socially damaging for the writer. Etiquette literature had gained a reputation from critics for being written mainly for financial gain – and so attaching one's name put one in danger of being seen as mere opportunism. For a true aristocrat to give guidance to others on etiquette risked giving rise to a suspicion of financial 'desperation'. Lady Colin Campbell, most obviously, turned to journalism and to etiquette writing to ease the financial burden of a very public divorce trial.¹⁸⁰

Lady Colin Campbell was, however, the exception rather than the rule – a genuine aristocrat advising on etiquette. It remains questionable whether (and unlikely that) any of the

¹⁷⁸ Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. vi.

¹⁷⁹ *Court Etiquette; a Guide to the Intercourse with Royal or Titled Persons, to Drawing Room, Levees, Courts, and Audiences, and the Usages of Social Life* (London: Mitchell, 1849), p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ Anne Jordan, *Love Well the Hour: The Life of Lady Colin Campbell, 1857-1911* (Leicester: Matador, 2010).

other aristocratic pseudonyms employed concealed persons of equivalently high station. The author of *Mixing in Society* (1870), ostensibly a countess, comments:

A standard work on manners must necessarily proceed from the pen of one who moves in the best circles: but then such persons are for the most part ignorant of the wants of those who occupy a lower position in the social scale; inaccessible to publishers; and, if given in a *dilettante* way to literary pursuits, turn naturally to the composition of novels, books of travel, or political treatises.¹⁸¹

Even though the author tries to present herself as an exception to the rule, at the same time, she reinforces the suspicion that those hiding behind pseudonyms were *not* real aristocrats.

While it is indeed unlikely, then, that pseudonyms such as ‘A Lady of Rank’ concealed real ladies of rank, such title pages provided protection from public derision for the writer. Because, as has been noted, they also projected a certain claim to authority on their subject, from the perspective of the publisher, this anonymity also could assist the marketability of etiquette manuals. It supported the impression that the writers/narrator-personae were well-integrated members of upper-class society, indistinguishable from their peers. One of the main selling points of etiquette literature was after all that through the writer’s advice, the reader would be similarly successfully integrated. Anonymity can thus be seen as normalising sophistication. If revealed, the author would be singled out, but if anonymous, the belief could be kept intact that the author was an integrated and successful member of high society who seamlessly blended in by following the rules he or she promotes in the manual.

¹⁸¹ Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. v-vi.

Three Etiquetteers

Even though anonymity can be seen as a standard feature of most etiquette writings, a few etiquette authors can be identified. On one hand, they include already well-known figures such as Lady Colin Campbell and Thomas Low Nichols who chose to openly attach their names to their works, and on the other, there is Emily Shirreff, who was discoverable through her publisher's archival records. The section above considered the standardised anonymous and somewhat cynically profiteering etiquette author persona, while this section looks at three writers who did not entirely fit this bill, not only because their motivations were not purely monetary. The following profiles give a sense of how these three authors' lives influenced their works of etiquette and vice versa. To each of them, the genre carried greater meaning, which is revealed through their lives' stories and each of them in turn transferred something of importance from their lives to the genre of etiquette, using it as a vehicle for their respective social missions, be it critique of the social system, social reform, or female empowerment.

I. Lady Colin Campbell (1857 – 1911)

Possibly the only true 'Lady of Rank' known to have attached her name to one of the etiquette manuals in my sample was Lady Colin Campbell, who authored *Etiquette of Good Society* (1893). Born Gertrude Elizabeth Blood in 1857, she was the daughter of locally influential landowners in Ireland. Most of her early childhood was spent abroad in Italy, where she enjoyed a liberal education. In 1875, when Gertrude was eighteen, she was not only presented at court, but in the same year published the article 'My Real Turkish Bath: A Lady's Experience in Egypt' about her family trip to Egypt in *Cassell's Family Magazine*, distributed by the same publisher who would later commission her etiquette manual *Etiquette of Good Society* (1893).¹⁸² Gertrude had started to write

¹⁸² 'My Real Turkish Bath: A Lady's Experience in Egypt', *Cassell's Family Magazine* (London, 1875), pp. 82–83.

short stories and art criticism as a child, but never thought to turn writing into a career – her path as an aristocratic wife was carefully laid out for her by her parents and demonstrated by her older siblings. In 1880, Gertrude's mother orchestrated a visit for her to England to interact with the prestigious Campbell family, who moved among royalty and whose youngest son Lord Colin was still unmarried. Gertrude Blood was a more free-spirited young lady than many others in her time; combined with her much-noted beauty, her openness seems to have been part of her appeal. In *Love Well the Hour: The Life of Lady Colin Campbell*, Anne Jordan notes many unusual habits for a young lady: active and aggressive sports, smoking, and an extremely sharp wit.¹⁸³ Within three days of meeting her, Campbell had proposed and been accepted. Ten months after the engagement, the couple married in London, turning Gertrude Elizabeth Blood into Lady Colin Campbell, much to the dismay of Lord Colin's family. The press coverage was extensive – the unconventional Miss Blood had already attracted curiosity. Lord and Lady Campbell had had little time to get to know each other, since Lord Colin was frequently incapacitated by health problems, which she was led to believe were minor at the beginning of their courtship. The new Lady Colin gradually had to adapt to her new social circles: 'It was a far more regulated social life than she was used to', writes Jordan: 'handbooks and relatives [...] helped with the etiquette'.¹⁸⁴

The marriage turned out to be far from a happy one, especially once she understood that the minor health issues were actually a life-threatening mix of gonorrhoea and syphilis and that Lord Colin had infected her. Only two years after the wedding the pair separated, and a lengthy and very public divorce trial began. After an eighteen-day trial, during which Lady Colin became a social phenomenon, with newspapers detailing her every move. In the end, a divorce was denied. In the aftermath of the trial, Lady Colin's infamy reached its height – 'her attendance at any art show was widely reported with detailed descriptions of her dress' and 'a crowd of twenty thousand

¹⁸³ Anne Jordan, *Love Well the Hour: The Life of Lady Colin Campbell, 1857-1911* (Leicester: Matador, 2010), p. 17.

¹⁸⁴ Jordan, *Love Well the Hour*, p. 32.

gathered when she visited her old charity haunt'.¹⁸⁵ Later years barely saw a change in her fame, as Lady Colin Campbell entered on numerous affairs, the most prestigious being with the Duke of Marlborough, who mentioned her as the only non-family member in his will and left her an enormous fortune of twenty thousand pounds and a Venetian villa.

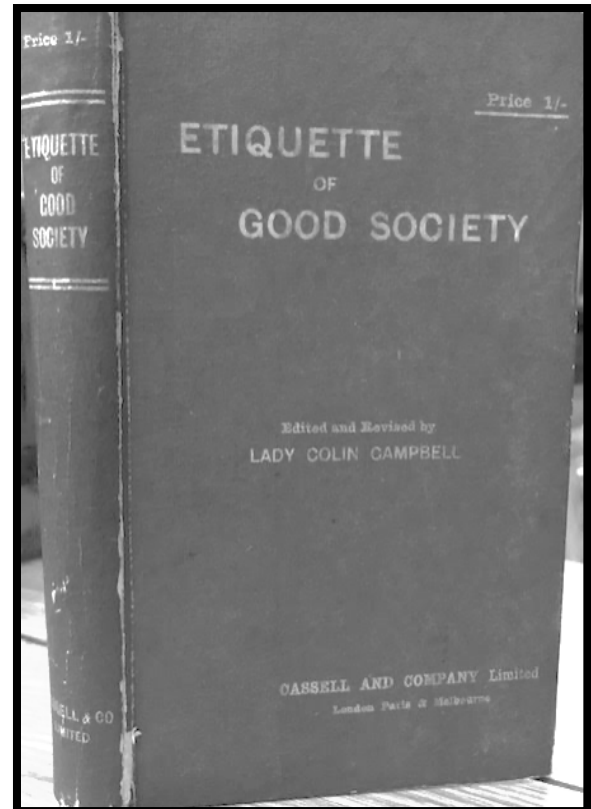


Fig. 7 Giovanni Baldoni, 'Gertrude Elisabeth, Lady Colin Campbell', oil on canvas, 1897. (left)
Fig. 8 Cover of Lady Colin Campbell's *Etiquette of Good Society* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1893). (right)

Before this act of generosity, Lady Colin was in serious financial trouble. Separated from her husband and shunned by her family, she was crippled by the legal bills of the divorce trial and turned of financial necessity to a journalistic career. After writing short articles for papers such as *The Saturday Review* and *Court and Society* in 1888, Lady Colin achieved her big break with a series in

¹⁸⁵ Jordan, *Love Well the Hour*, p. 140.

The World entitled ‘A Woman’s Walks’, which established her as a more serious journalist. Jordan also suspects that Lady Colin hid behind some of the anonymous etiquette columns in *The Queen*, which would explain why her future publisher Cassell commissioned her to translate a French etiquette manual, *The Lady’s Dressing Room* (1892), and eventually to write her own.¹⁸⁶

The French manual was entitled *Usages du Monde: Règles du Savoir-Vivre dans la Société Moderne* [Habits of the World: Rules of Good Manners in Modern Society] (1889), originally penned by ‘Baronne Staffe’, the pen name of Blanche-Augustine-Angèle Soyer, daughter of a military man, who used her grandmother’s maiden name to lend her the air of belonging to high society. Lady Colin’s name appeared in far larger print on the title page than the fake baroness’s (Cassell surely relied on Lady Colin’s name to sell the manual). The high expectations for the manual’s sales are attested by the huge number of advertisements at the front of the first edition: the first twenty-five pages, (at least five times the space given to advertisements in any other manual published at the time) are filled with adverts from companies eagerly marketing linens, hair products, powders and confinement belts.

In the text of the manual, one can see that Lady Colin has managed to lose some of the stiffness of the baroness’s original version in her adaptation and rendered it in a more light-hearted tone. The title Lady Colin chose for the manual is not a literal translation but borrowed from Jonathan Swift’s poem *The Lady’s Dressing Room* (1730), a favourite of Lady Colin. In the poem, the protagonist Strephon famously discovers his beloved’s dressing room and discovers to his horror and disgust the secrets of his Celia’s beauty regime:

On such a point few words are best,
And Strephon bids us guess the rest,
But swears how damnably the men lie,
In calling Celia sweet and cleanly [...]
As from within Pandora’s box,
When Epimetheus op’d the locks,
A sudden universal crew
Of human evils upwards flew

¹⁸⁶ Jordan, *Love Well the Hour*, p. 164.

Choosing this title for a work of etiquette intended as serious was a tacit act of defiance on the part of Lady Colin: Jordan interprets it as ‘a small way of stamping her own personality and rejecting the Baroness’ dictum’.¹⁸⁷ Swift’s savagely satiric and at points socially critical manner is also echoed, though somewhat softened, in Lady Colin’s other writings. Her first novel *Darell Blake* (1889) practises a critique of the wrongful assumption of superiority by the upper classes, whose members are described as ‘unfitted to assume the position of leaders of the people’.¹⁸⁸ The eponymous protagonist, a newly-wed journalist from humble circumstances, is offered a job as editor of the *Tribune* in London and soon after is seduced by the egotistical and spoiled Lady Alma, who introduces him to the pleasures and advantages of wealth and aristocratic society and leads him to neglect his wife and children for the world of *ton*. Darell’s ‘inner chord of snobbishness’ is criticised as a character flaw ‘so rarely eradicated from the breast of the inhabitants of the British Isles’.¹⁸⁹ Lady Colin subtitled *Darell Blake* ‘A Study’, implying that the novel substantially reflected her perception of high society.

While this critical social note is not altogether absent from the later published *Etiquette of Good Society*, it is under greater control here, given the genre’s restrictions of format and broad purpose. Lady Colin mocks the ‘fussiness’ of the upper class and remarks that ‘A man cannot say “I am well born, and *therefore* I am a gentleman”’, explaining that rank does not guarantee either refinement or good education.¹⁹⁰ Yet at the same time, she tells her reader that she ‘by no means wish[es] to underrate the value of gentle birth and blood’.¹⁹¹ A core adherence to the aristocratic code of behaviour is audible when Lady Colin writes (surely drawing on her personal experiences):

‘Manners recommend, prepare, and draw people together; in all the clubs manners make the members; manners make the fortune of the ambitious youth—for the most part, his manners marry him, and he marries manners’.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Jordan, *Love Well the Hour*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁸ Lady Colin Campbell, *Darell Blake: A Study* (London: Trischler and Company, 1889), p. 81.

¹⁸⁹ Lady Colin Campbell, *Darell Blake*, p. 32.

¹⁹⁰ Lady Colin Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1893), p. 36, p. 15.

¹⁹¹ Lady Colin Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society*, p. 15.

¹⁹² Lady Colin Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society*, p. 13.

Despite the harsh critique of the aristocratic world in *Darrell Blake*, and her own bad experience of it, Lady Colin clearly identifies as a member of that world. In lieu of the detached perspective of most manual writers, she writes of ‘our ways and habits’, clearly marking herself as one of the elite, having established herself through not only birth but also the study of etiquette which she passes on to her reader.¹⁹³

Etiquette of Good Society is stylistically superior to many other manuals of the time: it contextualises etiquette with a wide range of literary references, to authors such as Ruskin, Homer or Hannah More, as well as Swift. Translating from the French she is, clearly, *au fait* with that language (or purporting to be). These tropes exhibit Lady Colin’s superior education, or at least her desire to put her education on show, contrast with those authors who display a comparatively limited range of allusive embellishments. In that respect, even as she modifies the form of etiquette, she repeats its assumption that she, an already informed member of Society, is superior to the reader who looks to her for advice and instruction.

Cassell’s choice of Lady Colin Campbell as an author of an etiquette manual is interesting in itself. Granted, there may not have been many aristocrats eager to attach their name to such a work. The divorced Lady Colin, widely decried only a decade before the publication of *Etiquette of Good Society*, was in practice known to be largely excluded from polite society. As with *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, a wide range of literature is advertised at the back of *Etiquette of Good Society*, indicating that Cassell hoped either to reach across readerships with the help of Lady Colin, or, more cynically to profit from the scandal that surrounded her. The success the manual (attested to by reprints and the eagerness of companies to advertise in it) demonstrates the draw an aristocratic name or personality could have in terms of marketing etiquette literature: even if that name was tarnished, he or she was still a plausible-enough authority on manners and behaviour. That she was not an aristocrat by birth very likely worked in her favour. Lady Colin Campbell had

¹⁹³ Lady Colin Campbell, *Etiquette of Good Society*, p. 19.

achieved the feat of social integration, at least for a time, and the tarnished reputation of her husband was the source of some measure of sympathy for her. Her social success could therefore be marketed to help readers do the same, or, at the very least, provide insights into the world of the aristocracy.

II. Thomas Low Nichols (1815-1901)

The author of *How to Behave* (1873), makes an interesting case study of an etiquette author who more explicitly seems to have had other motivations beyond the purely monetary. Originally from the United States, Nichols was a medical practitioner turned radical journalist. What little is known of him is derived from his autobiographical writings, the most notable being *Forty Years of American Life* (1864), and from more recent biographies of his wife, the reformer Mary Gove Nichols, which chronicle their life together. In his early years, he began a professional education in medicine at Dartmouth, in the course of which he became interested in the social reach of journalism, abandoning his medical career in 1834. Nichols then travelled to Buffalo where he launched his journalistic career, writing pieces for some of the major newspapers there, often anonymously, but always very strongly opinionated in content. It was during his time in Buffalo that Nichols authored a piece defending Benjamin Rathbun, a local architect who had forged credit documents in order to build his vision of a modern city. This article landed Nichols in jail for libel, an episode conveniently left out of the very detailed *Forty Years of American Life*, but during which he authored the reflective *Journal in Jail, Kept During a Four Month's Imprisonment for Libel in the Jail of Erie County* (1840) which details his strong convictions of the importance of individual freedom and self-improvement regardless of one's position in life.

Due to the enemies he had made in the midst of the Rathbun scandal, Nichols chose to start afresh, moving to New York in the mid-1840s, where he reinvented himself as a more serious journalist. This time around, Nichols refrained from controversial involvement in individual cases but found a new cause: social reform. He became increasingly interested in alternative forms of

living and devoted himself to the American Vegetarian Society, holistic practices and medical research into progressive interventions such as contraception. He founded his own health journal and welcomed articles from writers and practitioners who were equally interested in natural methods of therapy and healthy ways of living. In 1847, Nichols attended a prestigious Christmas party at the home of Mary Gove, where Edgar Allan Poe read ‘The Raven’.¹⁹⁴ The then-married Mary Gove had achieved professional respect with her writings on hydropathic treatments and water cures and had submitted articles on these subjects anonymously to Nichols’s health journal. They were introduced, fell in love, and Mary divorced, which allowed them to marry and start their joint life-long reform mission. In an early letter to Mary, Nichols describes their shared mission as follows:

You and I were born to precisely the same destiny, and we shall both do our work. It is not to rule mankind; or be beloved by mankind; nor even know much about them; we are schoolmasters—teachers—nothing more. You will teach the women, I the men. We shall both instruct them. They will profit by our work, without knowing it; and without applause or fame, with the simple consciousness of having known our duty and done it, we shall enter upon a sphere of being where that consciousness will be to both an eternal satisfaction. To this I pledge my hand, without a glove; and so far am yours.¹⁹⁵

This educative spirit is reflected in all of Nichols’s writings – whether he was writing a manual about etiquette or a book on human physiology. In the years following the Nicholises’ marriage, their achievements included opening the world’s first hydropathic school in Port Chester in the early 1850s and the publication of *Esoteric Anthropology* (1853), which, according to Nichols, was ‘no book for the centre-table, the library shelf or the counter of a bookseller’, and which dealt with sexual pleasure, female emancipation and natural methods of contraception.¹⁹⁶

Their joint American career came to an abrupt halt, for reasons that are not entirely clear,

¹⁹⁴ Jean L. Silver-Isenstadt, *Shameless: The Visionary Life of Mary Gove Nichols* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 101.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in: Silver-Isenstadt, *Shameless*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Low Nichols, *Esoteric Anthropology (The Mysteries of Man); a Comprehensive and Confidential Treatise on the Structure, Functions, Passional Attractions, and Perversions, True and False Physical and Social Conditions, and the Most Intimate Relations of Men and Women. Anatomical, Physiological, Pathological, Therapeutical, and Obstetrical; Hygienic and Hydropathic* (London: Nichols & Co., 1877), p. iii.

at the outset of the Civil War in 1861, when they fled America and relocated to London. ‘Landing at the London docks utter strangers, with only two pens to win [their] daily bread’ and supplied with letters of recommendation, the Nicholises entered the literary scene in London and connected with personalities such as Thomas Carlyle, Robert Chambers, Charles Dickens, Charles Reade and John Ruskin.¹⁹⁷ With help from his new circle and in collaboration with his wife, Nichols published a large number of articles in a variety of magazines and periodicals, such as the *Athenaeum*, *Frazer’s Magazine* and *Household Worlds*.

Even though their location had changed, their mission had not; most of the articles centred on their idea of a healthy lifestyle. As Jean L. Silver-Isenstadt writes in her biography of Mary Gove Nichols, the pair ‘did not preach abstractions or remote theory; rather, they encouraged their followers to be aware of the holiness and happiness attainable through moral and healthful choices in each moment of life’.¹⁹⁸ In 1873, they founded Nichols and Company, a shop at 23 Oxford Street, where they sold sanitary supplies as well as (self-published) reprints of earlier publications, and founded a Vegetarian Restaurant at 429 Oxford Street. Their goal was to reach all people somehow – regardless of class, age or sex – and educate them on vegetarianism, social improvement, health and sanitary reforms through the means available to them.

Thomas Nichols’s etiquette manual *How to Behave: A Manual of Manners and Morals* (1873) is a surprisingly fitting launch (or re-launch) venture in the Nicholises’ larger opus and goal of social reform. ‘A reform in manners must precede any beneficial reforms in politics and society’, Nichols writes in the introduction: ‘Once manners are truly reformed, all other reforms become less difficult’.¹⁹⁹ It is regrettable that such arguments were rarely, if ever, explicitly stated in other guides. So it is hard to find direct evidence of other writers in the genre being driven by a similar

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Low Nichols, *Forty Years of American Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), p. vi; and Thomas Low Nichols, *Nichols’ Health Manual: Being Also a Memorial of the Life and Work of Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols* (London: E. W. Allen, 1887), p. 444.

¹⁹⁸ Silver-Isenstadt, *Shameless*, p. 309.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Low Nichols, *How to Behave: A Manual of Manners and Morals* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873), p. 8.

political philosophy. But, for all authors, this argument makes the most positive case for the existence of the manuals, and the clearest defence against the condescension they often received.

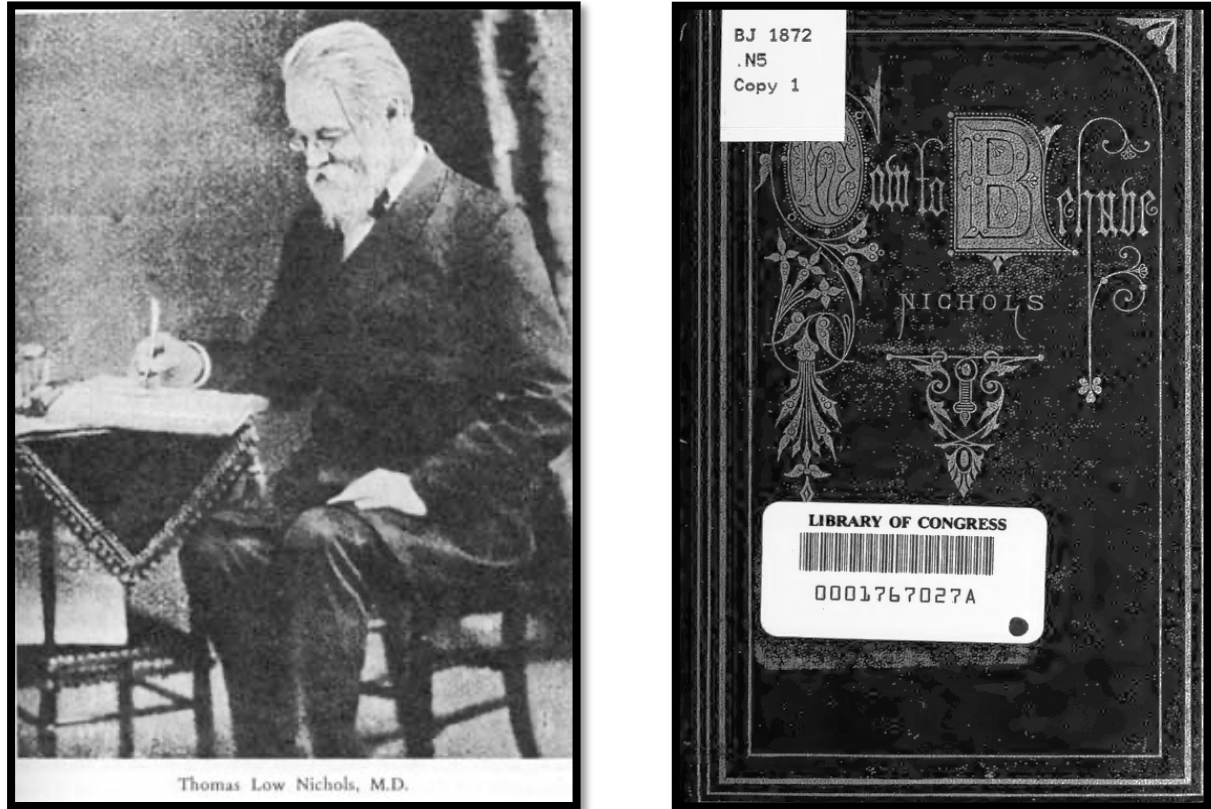


Fig. 9 Photograph of ‘Thomas Low Nichols, M. D.’ (before 1901) (left)

Fig. 10 Cover of Nichols’ *How to Behave: A Manual of Manners and Morals* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873). (right)

Nichols’ work appeared as part of a series of instruction manuals by him including *How to Cook* (1872) and *How to Live on Six-Pence a Day* (1873).²⁰⁰ By this time, Nichols had gained some international recognition: the German health magazine *Gesundheit, Wohlstand und Glück*, for example, picked up *How to Live on Six-Pence a Day* and printed a condensed version in a collection of ‘Aufsätze und Abhandlungen berühmter und Beliebter Autoren des In- und Auslandes welche

²⁰⁰ Nichols’s manual appeared under three different names within the first two years of publication: *How to Behave*, *Behaviour: A Manual of Manners and Morals*, and *Social Life: Its Principles, Relations, and Obligations: A Manual of Morals, and Guide to Good Behaviour*. The last was self-published.

das Leibliche und Geistige Wohl des Menschen zu befördern geeignet sind' [Essays and Treatises of Famous and Popular Authors, National and International, Intended to Promote the Physical and Mental Health of Humankind].²⁰¹

To Nichols, *How to Behave* was 'not simply a book of etiquette' but a work which more broadly discusses 'the elements of good manners, and the moral principles which are the basis of all right being and right doing'.²⁰² Nichols thus aimed at elevating his work above the stigmatised aims of the genre of etiquette and pushing its boundaries – he clearly does not fit Curtin's assumption about 'thoughtless authors' or Hayward's fear of moral corruption. His exceptionalism is evident in the introduction of the work, when he writes: 'I esteem [*How to Behave*] a very important part of the work of social reformation I have endeavoured to promote in all my writings'.²⁰³ While the format of the etiquette manual might have been somewhat restrictive for Nichols's purposes, the genre enabled him to target the large number of readers willing to purchase works of social guidance and advice. Nichols could thus use *How to Behave* as a platform to put his views before a fitting audience.

Nichols's style is refreshingly lucid: he does not resort to the French loans, the scattered high-brow allusions, or the pomposities other authors used to elevate their work; he favours direct statements and democratic straight-speaking: 'I mean to make [everything] so clear, so plain, so adapted to the simple common sense of every reader' so that the works becomes accessible to everyone, he explains.²⁰⁴ Nichols's work also stands out in terms of the narrative he creates. While most authors risked patronising the reader with their claimed benevolence, Nichols's text seems genuinely concerned with social progression for ordinary people and is much less caught up in gushing praise of the aristocracy. In the preface, he straight-forwardly addresses the shortcomings

²⁰¹ Thomas Low Nichols, 'Die Kunst Mit Sechs Pence=50 Pfennigen Täglich auskömmlich Zu Leben', in *Gesundheit, Wohlstand Und Glück: Eine Familien-Bibliothek Für Stadt Und Land*, Elfter Band (Berlin: Verlag von Theobald Grieben, 1875).

²⁰² Nichols, *How to Behave*, p. 1.

²⁰³ Nichols, *How to Behave*, p. 3.

²⁰⁴ Nichols, *How to Behave*, p. 8.

of the etiquette genre:

‘I have added to the number of useful books, because those I have examined, however correct and admirable they may be in laying down rules of conduct, or laws of etiquette [...] seem to me rather external and superficial; whereas good manners are based on morals, and good intention must be the spring of all right action.’²⁰⁵

Nichols was aware of the limitations the etiquette manual formula might impose and had imposed on other authors; what makes his manual particularly interesting is his use of the relatively restrictive genre in pursuit of a larger goal, interweaving ideas of social reform into what was so often seen as a conservative form. It is a known exception that calls the implications of the genre as a whole into question. As will be seen, Nichols was not the only one subverting or repurposing the genre, although for different reasons.

III. Emily Shirreff (1814-1897)

Finally, Emily Shirreff provides a second example of an author whose interest in producing an etiquette manual was nothing like the standard motivation assumed by contemporary and later critics. An activist in the women’s education movement, Shirreff was a staunch advocate for women’s rights to learn and work. Documents of the publishing house Frederick Warne & Co., held in the Reading University Archives, reveal her (beyond reasonable doubt) to be the author of *Manners and Rules of Good Society or Solecisms to Be Avoided* (1879), attributed to a ‘Member of the Aristocracy’.²⁰⁶ In one of the ledgers, the name ‘Emily Shirreff’ appears in relation to the manual.²⁰⁷ A later ledger lists a Miss E. Shirreff-Hilton as the recipient of the substantial thirty-one pounds ten shilling in royalties for the revised edition of 1929.²⁰⁸ In 1852, Emily’s younger sister Katherine

²⁰⁵ Nichols, *How to Behave*, p. viii.

²⁰⁶ The title was later changed to *Manners and Rules of Good Society*.

²⁰⁷ ‘Ledger 20: Agreements and Some Receipts, 1860s-1919’ (Frederick Warne & Co), Frederick Warne Archive, University of Reading, unpaginated.

²⁰⁸ ‘Ledger 19: Copyright Receipts, 1900-1930’ (Frederick Warne & Co), Frederick Warne Archive, University of Reading, unpaginated.

married a man with the last name Hilton; Emily had a close rapport with their daughter who was named Emily after her, and seems to have made her the beneficiary of the royalties for the manual after her own death.²⁰⁹

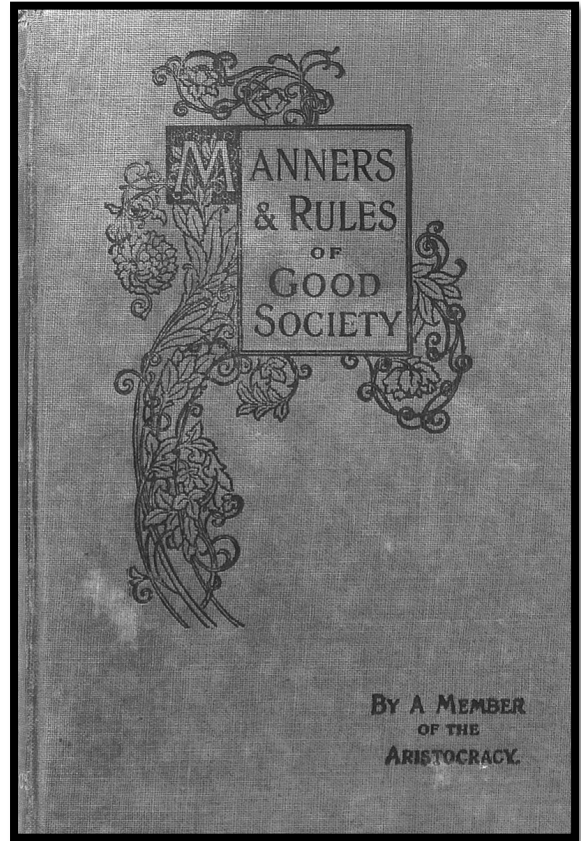


Fig. 11 Photograph of Emily Shirreff (left)

Fig. 12 Cover of Shirreff's *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 3rd Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879) written under the pseudonym 'A Member of the Aristocracy' (right)

While her writings and lectures have attracted attention from historians of women's education, Emily Shirreff herself remains in personal terms a somewhat shadowy figure. The bits that are known of her personal life are characterised by her compassion for family and friends accompanied by quiet endeavours to optimise women's opportunities in life. Her father being a

²⁰⁹ Edward W. Ellsworth, *Liberators of the Female Mind: The Shirreff Sisters, Educational Reform, and the Women's Movement*, Contributions in Women's Studies, no. 7 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 20.

naval officer, the family spent most of Emily's childhood abroad in France and Gibraltar. Together with her sister Maria, Emily was educated by a string of governesses, but increasingly took her education into her own hands: Edward Ellsworth reports in his biography of the Shirreff sisters that Emily spent eight hours a day practicing languages and studying (what we would now call) the humanities – history, classics, languages, and literature.²¹⁰ The Shirreffs were comfortably of the upper middle class rather than aristocratic, but they moved in high intellectual circles, including among their friends and acquaintances Charles Lyell, Mary Somerville, Herbert Spencer and William Whewell – contacts which clearly contributed to her intellectual development.²¹¹ Well-connected as she was, she seems to have been content with a fairly small and select society. Emily Davies, feminist and suffragist wrote wittily in a letter to a friend in 1869, that Emily Shirreff 'moves in such high circles that scarcely anybody I know has seen her'.²¹²

Together with her sister Maria, Emily became interested in the advantages of female education early on, both sisters making education their profession. In 1850, they co-wrote *Thoughts on Self-Culture Addressed to Women*, its publication financed by Maria's new husband. Maria's marriage, however, increasingly drove the sisters apart and they largely went their separate ways. After a failed romance with historian Henry Thomas Buckle, whom Emily described as 'brilliant and original beyond even what we had been led to expect' and who helped her greatly with her writings, she chose to remain unmarried and began to build a career of her own.²¹³ After the publication of her first single-authored work *Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women* (1858), however, she spent a large portion of her adult life nursing family members. It was not until the later stages of her life and after Maria's husband's death, that the

²¹⁰ Ellsworth, *Liberators of the Female Mind*, p. 11.

²¹¹ Ellsworth, *Liberators of the Female Mind*, p. 14.

²¹² Quoted in: Joyce Senders Pedersen, *The Reform of Girls' Secondary and Higher Education in Victorian England: A Study of Elites and Educational Change*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 102.

²¹³ Quoted in: Giles St. Aubyn, *A Victorian Eminence: The Life and Works of Henry Thomas Buckle* (London: Barrie, 1958), p. 24.

two sisters, both now in their early sixties, joined forces again, ‘with determination to fulfil their familial obligations but also to find personal intellectual satisfaction and make a contribution to society’.²¹⁴

Like Nichols, but perhaps less explicitly so, Shirreff seems to have seen the etiquette manual as a vehicle for furthering her educational ideas. In *The Work of the World and Women’s Share in It* (1881), Shirreff criticises the very restricted and shallow existence that women of the aristocracy are so often condemned to.²¹⁵ While she acknowledges that society cannot be changed overnight, she pleads for a better interpretation of what is, in her eyes, the best solution for women with limited financial freedom: household duties. ‘Home duties’, Shirreff writes,

include some of the most important that fall to the lot of human beings, but important duties and responsibilities are seldom fully understood and accepted by those who have been educated as triflers, and the education of women has necessarily been governed by the prevalent views of their condition.²¹⁶

The etiquette manual offers a platform for such education, with its minutely detailed instructions for the running of various functions in the home and assertion of responsibility for the good management of social occasions. Shirreff’s *Manners and Tone of Good Society* is noticeably more detailed in its attention to daily life and includes unusually explicit task instructions for tasks that the lady of the house could easily enact, as for example the correct way of writing and sending out of invitations for a dinner party. Such instruction would, Shirreff notes, save the lady of the house from idly standing by while her housekeeper takes on the more productive role. Throughout, the etiquette manual supports Shirreff’s mission to guide women toward an active and engaged life. The chapter on ‘Five o’clock Teas’, for example, highlights that invitations ‘are issued in the *name of the hostess only*’ and as such, urges the hostess not only to receive the guests, but also to take active charge of the event,

²¹⁴ Ellsworth, *Liberators of the Female Mind*, p. 23.

²¹⁵ Emily Shirreff, *The Work of the World and Women’s Share in It*, reprinted from the ‘Journal of the Women’s Education Union’ (London: Civil Service Printing and Publishing Company Limited, 1881), p. 3.

²¹⁶ Shirreff, *The Work of the World*, p. 6.

see[ing] that the ladies of highest consideration present, were duly taken down to tea in the intervals between the music [...] introduc[ing] gentlemen to them [...] if she noticed that no one whom they knew was present to offer them that civility.²¹⁷

Shirreff gives explicit direction: “The hostess would say, “May I introduce Mr. B. to you Mrs. A.?” at the instant of bringing him up to Mrs. A. Mrs. A. would smile and bow, and Mr. B. would then offer to take Mrs. A. to have some tea’.²¹⁸ The manual does not warn about the potential faux pas that could arise from this social situation, neither does it advise to take a ‘safe’ passive approach nor to adhere to ‘the strictest decorum’ as other guides do.²¹⁹ Instead, it gives the hostess concrete instructions to follow in order for the tea party to succeed. At every juncture the hostess is encouraged to participate actively in the goings-on around her. It empowers the lady of the house to take charge, rather than scares her into submission.

Actively involved in running the household, the woman of the house is rescued from the ‘butterfly existence’, which Shirreff addressed in one of her lectures delivered to the Women’s Education Union and which she dreaded for fellow women. In the same lecture, Shirreff criticises the missing education of women regarding their future lives as wives and mothers:

It may always be that a young girl will marry and become a mother; and if she does, she suddenly finds herself in a position of immense responsibility, with duties the due fulfilment of which require special knowledge and habits of observation and thought, which cannot be acquired rapidly, nor in the unrest of new surroundings.²²⁰

Unpreparedness and lack of knowledge, to Shirreff, resulted in idleness – the tasks women were not educated to do being taken away from them as soon as they appeared unfit. In *Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women* (1858), Shirreff therefore spoke of ‘the early formation of habits’ and ‘acting upon system’ as ‘the only remedy’.²²¹ As a form of literature densely populated with advice and explanation of a very specific system rich in habits,

²¹⁷ [Shirreff], *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. 110.

²¹⁸ [Shirreff], *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. 110.

²¹⁹ *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (Glasgow: George Watson, 1861), p. 30.

²²⁰ Shirreff, *The Work of the World*, p. 13.

²²¹ Emily Shirreff, *Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 9.

etiquette provides exactly that inculcation of habits that Shirreff strove for. The preface indeed describes *Manners and Tone of Good Society* as a ‘book of “rules and reference”’ recommended for the instruction of young girls’.²²²

Shirreff’s ideas of reform were, however, not directed at all classes of women. *Manners and Rules of Good Society*, like all her writings, has a dominant upper middle-class orientation. Her entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes ‘Shirreff’s liberalism’ as ‘of an older vintage’: she ‘did not seek to extend the franchise vertically to the unpropertied, merely horizontally to suitably qualified women’.²²³ This is especially evident in *The Work of the World and Women’s Share in It*, when Shirreff writes that ‘it is certain that the uneducated cannot do the work of the educated’.²²⁴ Shirreff does not see women’s position in the lower/middle-classes as problematic, but rather recognises and welcomes their liberty to work in a wider sphere than the home. It is no wonder then that, though *Manners and Rules of Good Society* is quite narrowly concentrated on the upper-middle classes and aristocracy, it enjoyed considerable success – the 15th edition, printed in 1888, speaks of ‘thousands of readers’ which the manual had previously ‘commended itself to’.²²⁵ Whether or not figure was accurate, the manual was frequently revised and added to and sold well into the twentieth century, so that her niece Emily Shirreff-Hilton continued to benefit from it after Shirreff’s death.

Elaborating the background and the reformist concerns of Nichols and Shirreff, makes it clear that Curtin’s and Langland’s characterisations of financially motivated authors and Hayward’s early assumptions of thoughtlessness, vulgarity, and mere mercenary intent on the part of the authors

²²² [Shirreff], *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. vi.

²²³ Philippa Levine, ‘Shirreff, Emily Anne Eliza (1814–1897), Educationist and Writer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2015
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25444> [accessed 28 February 2018].

²²⁴ Shirreff, *The Work of the World*, p. 9.

²²⁵ A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Rules of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 15th Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1888), p.iii.

of etiquette were, at least in some cases, unjust. An examination of the way these (non-stereotypical) etiquette authors utilised etiquette writings in the larger context of their pursuit of social reform exposes a larger potential politics of the genre: its capacity to serve an educational narrative that was neither merely descriptive nor by-default conservative. Etiquette manuals, attentive to ‘trivialities’ such as table manners, on a deeper level could anchor, for some writers, a more liberal, and in Nichols’s case even a radical, effort to create a more egalitarian and democratic society. Each writer considered etiquette manuals a means of reaching a wider community and hidden behind multiple layers of artifice, advanced the causes that they fought for.

CHAPTER II

Setting the Scene for Etiquette

Even though the term etiquette only became a clearly defined concept and rule system with the rise of etiquette literature in the mid-eighteen-thirties, its history dates centuries back. Etiquette's meanings changed and evolved over time so that for example although there was a key development of the concept in the eighteenth century through the publication of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (1773) (see below), this still had differences to the way that etiquette would be understood and applied by Victorian writers and their readers. Victorians in fact created their own version of the concept and interpreted/applied etiquette differently from the French most particularly, and their forefathers in the eighteenth century. The first point of inquiry of this chapter is therefore into the origins of etiquette and follows its development and deciding influences on the nineteenth-century version of etiquette.

Secondly, this chapter looks more closely at the 'scene' against which etiquette manuals were set. Following on from the Introduction, I examine two key concepts more closely, politeness and sociability. Both these concepts underwent significant changes which in turn shaped advice literature correspondingly. Through the analyses of these developments, this chapter aims to demonstrate that even though etiquette manuals were a book market phenomenon (as we have seen in the previous chapter), their content and narrative was in part shaped and guided by socio-cultural changes occurring at the turn of the nineteenth century. Briefly comparing conduct literature of the previous century to etiquette manuals of the Victorian period will bring to light the acculturation that advice literature had gone through, which resulted in the emergence of etiquette literature.

The Origins of Etiquette

The word ‘etiquette’ (as well as the origin of the concept itself) stems from the French, where it originated in the Middle Ages and was used in the sense of a label or ticket detailing contents mostly of stored goods. It was during the seventeenth century that the word gained an additional meaning relating to behaviour. During his reign, Louis XIV used ‘étiquettes’ (little paper labels) to remind courtiers of the rules and customs he wanted them to observe at court.²²⁶ A little later, the exact protocol, procedures and ceremonies of the royal court in France came to be written down under the title of ‘etiquette’ and the word fully transferred its meaning.²²⁷ The French used ‘etiquette’ now to describe these systems of behaviour deemed appropriate at court. It was this meaning of the word which migrated to the English language in the mid-eighteenth century. According to the *OED*, in English, the term came to describe (from 1737) ‘1. a. The system of ceremony prescribed by a court’ and (from 1757) ‘1. b. The customary code of polite behaviour in society; good manners’, according to the *OED*.²²⁸ This definition already came very close to the way Victorians understood it, and especially the second definition can be found to echo the words of one etiquette writer in 1861, who explained that etiquette plainly was a set of ‘rules and regulations which the common consent of well-bred people have established and drawn up into a kind of social code, entitled Etiquette’.²²⁹

The 1791 edition of J. Walker’s *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* is the first English dictionary to list the word ‘etiquette’, defining it as ‘the polite form or manner of doing anything; the

²²⁶ See: L.M. Roosen, *Social Unrest at Versailles: Madame de Maintenon and the System of Etiquette and Hierarchy at the Court of Louis XIV* (Auburn: Auburn University, 1993).

²²⁷ See for example Louis XIV’s sister-in-law’s pamphlet: Duchess of Orleans, *Versailles Etiquette*, 1704.

²²⁸ ‘etiquette, n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, January 2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/64853> [accessed 28 February 2018].

²²⁹ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 5.

ceremonial of good manners'.²³⁰ Walker adds: 'This word crept into use some years after Johnson wrote his Dictionary [in 1755 and 1785...]. I have ventured [...] to insert it here, as it seems to be established; and as it is more specific than *ceremonial*, it is certainly of use'.²³¹ The clarification in meaning of the word etiquette around the time Walker was writing his dictionary points to the greater social awareness of the concept around the same time. In *The Civilising Process* (1987), Norbert Elias notes that 'the more or less sudden emergence of words within languages nearly always points to changes in the lives of people themselves, particularly when the new concepts are destined to become [...] central and longlived'.²³² Elias's notion certainly applies to etiquette, as the emergence of the word pinpoints correlating changes on the social scene which in turn shaped the literature of etiquette.

The *OED* traces the first recorded use of the word 'etiquette' in the English language to 1737, in *The London Magazine*, and it is evident that, at that point in time, 'etiquette' was not a term the writer or his readers were familiar with. In the article, the author describes a phenomenon he witnessed at the Spanish court: 'They kept with the utmost Rigour to a certain Regulation call'd the *Etiquette*; it contain'd all the Ceremonies they were obliged to observe'.²³³ Throughout the article, the word etiquette is capitalised, italicised and prefaced with an article, which clearly marks it as a foreign loan word. One instance of use about a decade later already marks a change: 'without hesitation kiss his slipper or what else the *étiquette* of that court requires', Lord Chesterfield implores.²³⁴ While the word etiquette is still clearly denoted as a loan word, at this point, its use

²³⁰ Quoted in: Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 19.

²³¹ John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, 1791*, 1st ed. reprinted (Menston, Yorkshire: The Scholar Press Limited, 1968), unpaginated.

²³² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners; Changes in the Code of Conduct and Feeling in Early Modern Times*, Mole Editions, (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 54.

²³³ 'Of the Spanish Etiquette, or Ceremonial of the Palace, &c.', *London Magazine: Or, the Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, January 1737, pp. 37–39 (p.37).

²³⁴ Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield, 'Letter to His Son', London, 19th of March 1750, In: *Letters* VOL I (Dublin: Published by Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, From the Originals now in her possession. Printed for E. Lynch, 1775), p. 517.

seems more naturalised, and denotes court ceremonial but not yet the approved behaviour of a wider polite society.

The popularisation and later commercialisation of ‘etiquette’ both as a term in English usage and a concept can be understood as closely tied to the influence of Lord Chesterfield’s *Letters to his Son*, written in mid-century but first published shortly after his death in 1773, which served in many ways as an antecedent for etiquette literature. Chesterfield and his posthumous editors saw the potential to exploit the rules of etiquette as a means for social success. As we will see later, the pioneering explicitness of his advice would also be widely emulated by Victorian etiquette writers, albeit within a different format (depersonalised, largely defamiliarised) and with a somewhat broader view of the target society for upward mobility and Chesterfield is frequently cited as a figurehead of etiquette throughout the Victorian period. The author of *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (1857), for example, dedicates a whole chapter to Chesterfield’s Maxims and introduces him as the ‘most polished man in England’ and ‘a strong example of the efficacy of practice’.²³⁵ An obvious motive here is that etiquette writers were deploying Chesterfield as an aristocratic antecedent for their own function, looking to gain cultural credit by the association. A cheap pocketbook stood to be elevated through the reference to Chesterfield’s name.

But his earlier influence is well illustrated by the fact that there is only one surviving publication from prior to 1834 with the word etiquette in the title that is *not* related to Lord Chesterfield’s *Letters*: a cookery book called *The Royal Cook, Or, the Modern Etiquette of the Table, Displayed with Accuracy, Elegance and Taste, being a full and exact Description of the Manner of Dressing and Serving up Royal Dinners* (1774). Already in the 1770s and for many decades after that, the circulation of Chesterfield’s *Letters* was wide, even though he received a mixed reception of his work from the public. To his frequently cited critique that Lord Chesterfield seemingly possessed the ‘morals

²³⁵ *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., 1857), p. 11.

of a whore and the manners of a dancing master', Samuel Johnson for example added: 'Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young gentleman'.²³⁶ Johnson's dictum became programme: after an initial print run of the letters in the usual three volume format, they were contracted, edited and published in various cheaper formats.

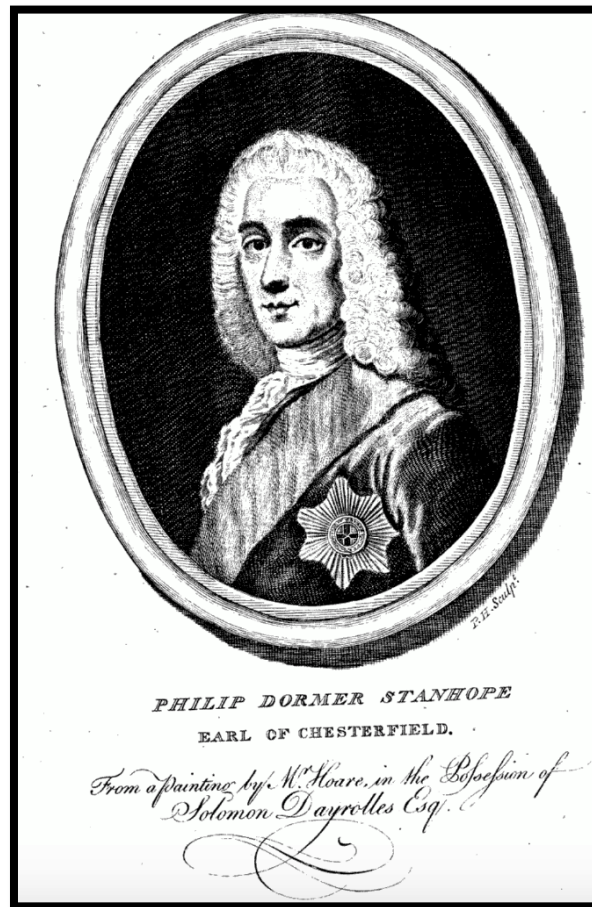


Fig. 13 Portrait of Lord Chesterfield, *1694, † 1773
Frontispiece of the 1775 edition of *Letters to His Son*
© British Library

²³⁶ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson Vol. II* www.gutenberg.org/files/1564/1564-h/1564-h.htm [Accessed on the 4th of June 2018].

Like etiquette writers after him, Chesterfield devised a 'System of Education', which taught manners and refinement in order to secure a superior social standing.²³⁷ For Chesterfield, etiquette becomes a vehicle for his son's social success: 'Your own rank and fortune will not assist you', Chesterfield writes to his son in 1748, 'your merit and your manners can alone raise you to figure and fortune'.²³⁸ It is this ethos that Victorian etiquette writers likewise promoted, and Lord Chesterfield offered himself as the perfect success story, having overcome those who formerly mocked him in the House of Commons by gaining respectability through the acquisition of perfect manners. It was precisely (what Johnson called) his 'dancing master manners' that made him so appealing: Chesterfield patiently sought to cultivate and develop the 'graces', a rendition of etiquette in practice, in his son—modelling a social refinement that etiquette writers tried to achieve likewise with their audience, though their method was much more direct and impersonal.

Turning Lord Chesterfield into a figurehead for good behaviour was not as easy a matter as it might appear. He made no objection to adultery, lying or other matters which conflicted with Christian morality in his own time, let alone in Victorian times. Statements such as 'I believe that hypocrisy, fornication and adultery are all within the lines of morality' and 'If you want a woman, follow the sacred example of the ancient Patriarchs, and take a handmaid' are among the many examples which would surely have offended some readers.²³⁹ Jenny Davidson fittingly writes that by the end of the eighteenth-century, 'Chesterfield had redefined morals in terms of manners'.²⁴⁰ Indeed, Chesterfield's writings forced open a new discursive field on behaviour, one that was different from the more religion-oriented conduct works, as discussed in the Introduction and

²³⁷ Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield, *Letters*, VOL I (Dublin: Published by Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, From the Originals now in her possession. Printed for E. Lynch, 1775), p. vi.

²³⁸ Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield, 'Letter to His Son', Bath, March 9, 1748, In: *Letters*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 73.

²³⁹ Chesterfield, 'Letter to His Son', London, 14th of October 1765, Quoted in: Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 70; Chesterfield, 'Letter to His Son', 22nd of October 1765 In: Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield, *Appendix to Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Godson*, ed. by The Earl of Carnarvon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), p. 58.

²⁴⁰ Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 70.

Chapter One, which had dominated the advice literature market.

The adaptations of the *Letters* by John Trusler helped to turn Chesterfield into a socially acceptable role model and a commercialised household name for good behaviour. John Trusler was a writer himself and the author of a wide range of historical texts. An ordained clergyman who had been educated at Cambridge, Trusler held the post of chaplain at Somerset House for a couple of years, was also the founder of the Literary Society, ran a publishing business at 62 Wardour Street in London on the side, and referred to himself as a ‘medical gentleman’ (though whether he had the qualification to do so is unclear). His editing of Chesterfield’s letters to omit indelicacy or indecency is hardly surprising, given his clerical status and the strongly religious oriented book market he had in mind. Trusler’s *Principles of Politeness* (1775) promised ‘to give the essence of [Chesterfield’s] letters [...] at a tenth those letters fell for’, making them accessible to a wide audience, and assuring the reader that they had been edited to remove all ‘indelicacy’.²⁴¹ The resulting heavily expurgated selection enjoyed immense popularity and good sales numbers so that only a few years after publication, Trusler was able to convincingly claim that the volume had been ‘translated into every European language’.²⁴²

In 1804, almost thirty years after *Principles of Politeness* first appeared, Trusler re-edited his work and chose a new title for it, *A System of Etiquette*. But it still remained firmly framed within the older concepts of ‘politeness’ and ‘conduct’. *A System of Etiquette* lacked the format and linguistic tone (impersonal tone, pragmatic sentences, and grammar book structure) through which the genre of etiquette guides would later define itself, and its prosaic nature hinders it being clearly defined as an etiquette manual (as those from 1834 onwards could) – the work has strong religious tones and sits much closer to conduct literature. Yet Trusler’s change of title indicates the

²⁴¹ The Reverend Dr John Trusler, *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World by the Late Lord Chesterfield Methodised and Digested under Distinct Heads* (London: John Bell, 1775), p. ii; Trusler, *Principles of Politeness*, p. i.

²⁴² James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford [England]: New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 153.

development of etiquette as a growing concept in cultural discourse. While the 1775 work still had to classify Chesterfield's lessons under the guise of *politeness*, the new edition now calls almost identical content *etiquette*. Politeness, according to Trusler, can be understood as 'the qualifications necessary to make [a young gentleman] well received in the world', and etiquette as 'those forms of Society necessary to be known by every young gentleman who wishes to be well received'.²⁴³ His descriptions of the two terms are practically interchangeable, with the one difference that he more narrowly defined etiquette as relating to social comportment. But this linguistic change does not mean that 'etiquette' as it came to be developed as a literary genre in the nineteenth century was the same as Trusler's more opportunistic usage.

The Decline of Politeness – The Rise of Etiquette

In conduct writer Abel Boyer's words, eighteenth-century politeness was 'a dextrous management of our Words and Actions, whereby we make other People have better Opinion of us and of us and themselves'.²⁴⁴ Boyer could equally have described etiquette with this sentence, yet the two concepts differ importantly in some respects, and a comparison brings out a subtle cultural shift from the eighteenth to the nineteenth-century market in conduct literature.

In historical and literary scholarship, the eighteenth century is often dubbed 'the age of politeness' and England 'the polite nation'. Looking back, a mid-Victorian etiquette writer would fittingly define politeness as a general ethos: 'the result of the combined action of all the moral and social feelings, guided by judgement and refined by taste'.²⁴⁵ This notion offered itself (then

²⁴³ Trusler, *Principles of Politeness*, p. i; and The Reverend Dr. John Trusler, *A System of Etiquette* (Bath: W. Meyler, 1804), p. 1.

²⁴⁴ Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus* (London, 1702) p. 106.

²⁴⁵ *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette, and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1857), p. 9.

and now) as an umbrella term by which to judge the social appropriateness of actions, objects, even entire social movements. Etiquette on the other hand, was a less versatile term, and was always used narrowly to describe social behaviour in relation to a set of prescribed rules. Politeness of course had clear application to behaviour too, and was widely discussed in essays, religious tracts and conduct writings. Yet no matter in what form of literature, politeness in relation to behaviour was generally understood as an awareness of how one acted, a regard for others and to a certain extent, artifice.²⁴⁶

Contrary to etiquette, politeness tended not to be defined in relation to the regulation of specific circumstances or environments, such as dinner parties, balls and the like, and its articulation was not necessarily broken down into sets of rules. Neither was politeness intrinsically linked to a specific class—the higher classes or fashionable set—as was etiquette, but was, in theory, understood as ‘an interactive medium for persons of differing status, wealth, and function’.²⁴⁷ As a concept, it promoted a general ambience of reciprocity and equality, with guides to politeness often suggesting that individuals’ ‘behaviour did not need to indicate, repeatedly and ubiquitously, hierarchical distinctions’—the very opposite of etiquette literature’s regulative advice.²⁴⁸

This did not of course mean that the execution of politeness was always egalitarian in its impulse. Jefferson Looney has found that in prospering areas such as Leeds and York, commodities of politeness had been ‘seized upon by a newly prosperous and numerous class of civil servants, army and navy officers, bourgeois and clergymen, even shopkeepers and craftsmen, all anxious to

²⁴⁶ See: Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830”, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44.No. 2 (April 2005), 312–29; and John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 455–72 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440102000191>>.

²⁴⁷ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869–98 (p. 881).

²⁴⁸ Klein, ‘Politeness’, p. 879.

carve out and defend an appropriately respectable niche in the social pecking order'.²⁴⁹ Politeness was undoubtedly a power mechanism; a polite gentleman could not only hope to express his opinion honestly under the protection of politeness, but this opinion was also far more likely to be accepted and taken as valid if expressed (or performed) politely.²⁵⁰

The aspirations driving polite behaviour are often painted as being of a self-improving nature, rather than the more negatively connotated 'social climbing' of etiquette practitioners. One etiquette writer for example argues that 'no matter how young they may be, in what seclusion they may have lived, under what early disadvantages they may have laboured [...] a knowledge of those social observances is absolutely indispensable for all who aspire to live in society' and to better their position in said society.²⁵¹ On the flipside, politeness was 'associated with improvement in the sense not just of refinements of style but of moral and other reform', elements which are almost completely absent from etiquette's discourse.²⁵² Another etiquette author indeed laments this attention to the social surface at the expense of morality and true feeling: 'The usage of the world is, therefore, often nothing more than a skilful calculation of vanity, a futile game, a superficial observance of form, a false politeness, which would lead to frivolity, or perfidy, did not true politeness animate it with delicacy, reserve, and benevolence. Would that custom had never been separated from this virtuous amiability!'.²⁵³

The promotion of etiquette was a marketing gambit, looking to appeal to a new section of the British book-buying public eager for social advancement and/or for insight into high society. In the discursive field of politeness, Klein identifies the key vocabulary as 'easiness',

²⁴⁹ J. Jefferson Looney, 'Cultural Life in the Provinces: Leeds and York, 1720-1820', in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. by Lawrence Stone and others, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 483–510 (p. 485).

²⁵⁰ Kate Davison, 'Occasional Politeness and Gentleman's Laughter in 18th C England', *The Historical Journal*, 57.04 (2014), pp. 921–45 (p. 934).

²⁵¹ Countess of ******, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), pp. vi–vii.

²⁵² Klein, 'Politeness', p. 875.

²⁵³ A Lady, *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Morrison, 1847), p. 14.

‘naturalness’, and ‘freedom’.²⁵⁴ These terms signal a goal that is decidedly different from that of etiquette, which relied on buzz words such as ‘aspire’, ‘indispensable’, ‘necessary’ and ‘useful’. These key terms remained present in etiquette literature through the decades: the author of *Etiquette for Ladies* (1837) for example claimed that wanting to take part in society ‘render[ed] a little manual of this sort *necessary*’, while the author of *Mixing in Society* (1870) similarly explained how ‘a knowledge of those social observances is absolutely *indispensable* for all who *aspire* to live in society’, along with the author of *The Glass of Fashion* (1881), who stated that ‘if I have not failed egregiously in carrying out my design, [the manual] will be found *useful*’ by all readers who wish to participate in society.²⁵⁵

It is therefore unsurprising that politeness and etiquette found different ways of application. Davison has identified politeness as ‘an occasional practice’, only applicable to circumstances of rather formal nature (surely due to its artificial tendencies) and superfluous in everyday life and friendly encounters.²⁵⁶ Etiquette, on the other hand, had its readers believe that it needed to be observed at all times and at all costs, from an audience with the Queen to the most intimate dinner party. The author of *The Ladies’ Science of Etiquette* (1847), indeed, grumbles about the rigidity of social expectation that produces the need for etiquette guidance: ‘the duties of hospitality are of frequent, recurrence, fatiguing, and troublesome, but they are an indispensable obligation’.²⁵⁷

John Tosh has argued that ‘politeness is not a quality we readily associate with Victorian men’, which has largely to do with the fact that politeness conflicted with the reconfiguration of

²⁵⁴ Klein, ‘Politeness’, p. 879.

²⁵⁵ *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837), p. 6; and: Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. vii; and: The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881), p. vi. My own italics.

²⁵⁶ Davison, ‘Occasional Politeness’, p. 923.

²⁵⁷ A Lady, *The Ladies’ Science of Etiquette*, p. 22.

ideas surrounding masculinity at the beginning of the Victorian Age.²⁵⁸ There has been a good deal of further academic discussion of how the notion of effeminacy was associated with politeness.²⁵⁹ From a Victorian perspective, mechanisms of politeness were ‘feminized’ and ‘domesticated’, as ‘by the early 1800s, its emphasis on pleasing, on “consider[ing] others more than [oneself],” on self-effacement, “annihilating, as it were, ourselves,” had become naturalized as characteristics of femininity’.²⁶⁰

There also seems to have been a striving for more refinement on the part of newly educated classes in mid to late Victorian culture, which in some contexts made etiquette a more marketable commodity than politeness. In this spirit, one manual states: ‘We have improved on the manners, if not on the morals, of our eighteenth-century forefathers; and it is well that we should also improve on their dining-room arrangements’.²⁶¹ Another manual similarly claims that the word ‘politeness’ is even ‘thought vulgar’ in the world of aristocratic people.²⁶² Scholarship supports these conceptualisations of etiquette manuals. Klein writes broadly that politeness was one of the things that was ‘rejected [by Victorians] in reconfiguring their culture for new times’.²⁶³ Burns and Innes elaborate this further by finding that ‘eighteenth-century manners and modes of conduct, correspondingly, were portrayed as coarse and lax, marred by gluttony, drunkenness, and tolerance for the sexual peccadilloes of lords and gentlemen’.²⁶⁴ Etiquette on the other hand, appealed to

²⁵⁸ John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 455–72 (p. 455).

²⁵⁹ For a broader analyses of the effeminate nature of politeness and the anxieties around it, see: Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 455–72, and Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001).

²⁶⁰ Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man’, p. 314.

²⁶¹ The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881), p. 38.

²⁶² *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 23.

²⁶³ Klein, ‘Politeness’, p. 870.

²⁶⁴ Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 5.

readers in the 1830s and 40s as a fixed framework to operate in. Mastering its rules gave confidence in the possibility of social success, which resonated with the aspirational cultural trend among the middle classes at the beginning of the Victorian Age.

The Timing of Etiquette: Changing Modes of Sociability

While lower production costs, growing literacy, and other developments on the book market aided the commodification of etiquette guidance and its distribution (as we have seen in Chapter I), cultural transformations were necessary to its emergence as a coherent and (in some contexts) credible discourse. The specialisation from general conduct literature to the etiquette ‘manual’ raises an important question: if behavioural writing in the nineteenth century was not necessarily motivated by Christian mores, what was it motivated by? An obvious answer could, of course, be the desire for social mobility. Etiquette writers constantly advertised that the reader would be able to get on in life with their advice. The author of *Ladies and Gentlemen* (1876), for example, makes this explicit in the introduction, stating that ‘in the present day [...] the circles of good society are so constantly receiving into themselves a man who has risen from the cottage [...] with a knowledge of these social laws’.²⁶⁵ While we will take a closer look at the mechanisms of social mobility in Chapter III, another important factor to consider was the changing modes of sociability which occurred towards the late eighteenth century.

Philip Carter argues that the eighteenth century was characterised by ‘a desire to move [...] to more exclusive and intimate forms of sociability [...] where the dining- and drawing-room became key locations for genteel contact’.²⁶⁶ In her study *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian*

²⁶⁵ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1876), pp. 9-10.

²⁶⁶ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*, *Women and Men in History* (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 213.

England (2009), Amanda Vickery similarly places the ‘emergence of the urban culture of visiting’ as well as ‘a new mode of sociability’ in mid-eighteenth century society, which ‘revolutionised the uses of interior space, publicising the middling home to a degree unimaginable’ before.²⁶⁷ In many ways, this shift to ‘public’, like private, socialising now also increasingly occurring in the home, came to encourage the emergence of etiquette literature in the following century: socialising in the controlled space of the home or a club inevitably led to what Vickery terms ‘a fashionable institution of inclusion and exclusion’ and increased selectiveness attached to social gatherings since clear invitations were needed in order to participate.²⁶⁸ One function of the etiquette manual was to help the reader navigate this increasingly exclusive socialising, (though mastering the manual of course could not itself open the door).

The change in sociability was also reflected in the layout of many middle and upper class houses, which now included specific function rooms designated to entertain guests and visitors, and whose layout changed from many smaller rooms to fewer more extensive ones.²⁶⁹ Whereas in the eighteenth century, adjacent state rooms had been used to entertain large numbers of guests and divide them according to rank (with the most elite guests only gathering in the final room), salons were now in fashion, ensuring that only certain guests were invited in the first place; at the same time, divisions within invited parties were subtle but often clearly marked. The fostering of such exclusivity by the process of differentiating between appropriate and inappropriate guests, and between those of higher and lower relative status, was an important stimulus for the emergence of etiquette manuals, a form of literature which essentially promised to help its readers navigate social events fraught with danger for the unwary. The perceived danger of overstepping one’s mark was social exclusion, a fate no one desired.

Introductions were thus an essential prerequisite for taking part in society. As Karen

²⁶⁷ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 14.

²⁶⁸ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 14.

²⁶⁹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 16.

Keeley says, ‘introductions functioned as social gatekeeping, in which the unworthy could be prevented from making the acquaintance of their social superiors. During introductions, the introducer’s role was, in the words of *Routledge’s Manual of Etiquette*, “to certify to each the respectability of the other”’.²⁷⁰ The observance of etiquette here was crucial, and etiquette writers devoted large portions of their manuals to this interaction. The general maxim was that without an introduction, there must not be any interaction. There were of course many finer nuances of this maxim – at dinner parties, for example, most guests people would be familiar with the hosts, but not necessarily with each other so that one of the functions of the good host and hostess was to formally introduce those in necessary of introduction to each other. Supposedly it was assumed that at a dinner party the guests were more or less equal (in the sense that guests were broadly speaking from the same socio-economic background), though of course rank was still observed. Introductions were thus facilitated in that they were assumed to be mutually agreeable. The real crux was getting to the dinner party in the first place, as selecting dining guests was a serious affair: ‘An invitation to dinner is a social compliment [...] a dinner-guest is a person whom we desire to honour, and whom we select with care from the mass of our acquaintance’, writes one etiquette author. And of course, an invitation was an impossibility without proper introductions.²⁷¹

Unsurprisingly, manuals were especially rigorous about the introduction protocol when it concerned people of different classes. Naturally, the higher-ranking individual should take precedence, with the stipulation that ‘nouveaux riches who desire to attain a place in society should avoid making any advances to people of rank’²⁷², which would be the height of vulgarity. Not all introductions were durable either: ‘it is almost unnecessary to hint that the introductions which

²⁷⁰ Karen Keely, ““Animal-Etiquette” and Edwardian Manners in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*”, in Jackie C. Horne and Donna R. White (eds), *Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows: a Children's Classic at 100*, Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press, 2000, p. 115.

²⁷¹ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: Including the Etiquette of Weddings* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1894), p. 24.

²⁷² Day, *Hints on Etiquette* (1836), p. 39.

are made at public balls and assemblies are for the night only'.²⁷³

As it could be very difficult to gain a lasting introduction, methods of circumventing the restrictions were needed. One way was for example to 'hire' a lady to chaperone younger women, which was especially popular for daughters of a marriageable age who needed to be introduced to society. Of course, hiring an appropriate distressed gentleman required a budget. This was a 'commercial transaction' which benefitted both sides.²⁷⁴ Mrs Humphry explains this practice which was still in use at the turn of the century in *Etiquette for Every Day* (1902): 'so many good old families are poor nowadays, and millionaires have raised the standard of living to so high and costly a level, that there is no lack of ladies who venture upon the arduous task of chaperonage'.²⁷⁵ Prices ranged from as low as ten guineas a week at the turn of the century to as extravagant as 1000 guineas for the season.²⁷⁶ Yet even though this had turned into a 'very usual thing' to do for newly wealthy families by the time Humphry was writing, did not mean the process was available to just anyone with sufficient funds:

The terms, as a rule, are high. [...] All are most particular about the girls being presentable, possessing good credentials, and dressing well. In the first interview a very critical investigation is made. Manner, speech, gesture and bearing are all taken into consideration. "Can I introduce her as a friend to my friends?" is the question in the mind of the chaperon. The impossible girl is soon disposed of.²⁷⁷

Gaining access to society and its social life was therefore neither straight-forward nor achieved with money alone. Exclusive circles were forming (in London and elsewhere) which came together in equally exclusive forms of sociability. Curtin similarly sees a retreat of the upper classes from public entertainment and towards more restrictive forms in which decades: 'Elites sought to shield themselves from inferiors first by giving up promiscuous entertainments such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh in favour of private parties and clubs whose invitations and membership were

²⁷³ *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837), p. 49.

²⁷⁴ Mrs Humphry, *Etiquette for Every Day* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), p. 327.

²⁷⁵ Mrs Humphry, *Etiquette for Every Day*, p. 327.

²⁷⁶ Mrs Humphry, *Etiquette for Every Day*, p. 327.

²⁷⁷ Mrs Humphry, *Etiquette for Every Day*, p. 327.

carefully screened and second by insulating themselves from the encounters of everyday life by a thicket of etiquette'.²⁷⁸

But private social gatherings more and more became a way to gain power, respect and success. Salons, for example, were spaces in which power could be asserted as well as distributed. Lady Blessington hosted literary salons to position herself among the literary elite of the age, whereas many other wives used salons to further their husbands' business or political endeavours to succeed and to maintain financial security.²⁷⁹ No matter the specific purpose they served for individuals, salons were another facet of a very exclusive sociability which fed into the power dynamics of the age: those hosting could decide activities and guest list, while the attendees could benefit from the access to an exclusive circle which could benefit them socially as well as financially.

Clubs were yet another way of filtering sociability to a more exclusive range. Clubs mostly had social orientations and could be specific to for example the clergy, the medical community, political parties, the army or the navy and one had to fit the category the club prescribed for its members. Some clubs were more exclusive than others, the most exclusive ones being tied to rank. There were (in)famous aristocratic establishments in London such as Almack's, White's, or Brooks', founded as early as the 1760s, but which properly became frequented at the turn of the century. Being a member of one of those elite clubs was a sign of status and prestige – one etiquette author, writing in the mid-1850s, for example uses the pseudonym 'The Man in the Club Window' (the window being one of a 'certain club') to assert his authority as a member of the upper class.²⁸⁰ The privacy element which the club offered is perhaps best described by Andrew St George's metaphor of the club being a 'home away from home for gentlemen', a trope which

²⁷⁸ Curtin, *Propriety and Position*, p. 148.

²⁷⁹ Hostesses, political wives and the feature of hosting for financial and social gain are at length discussed in the second section of Chapter IV.

²⁸⁰ See: *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859).

many magazines, Punch most notably, often parodied (see fig.14 below).²⁸¹ Women's socialising space was at the same time seen to be as primarily in the home, calls, teas, dinners at either their own house or the host's. Men had more opportunities to socialise in public, which is reflected by etiquette guides. Even as late as 1894, an edition of *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1894) for example still only has hints on public meetings in the gentlemen's section.²⁸² The club was a compromise between the spheres and allowed wider but still selective socialisation.

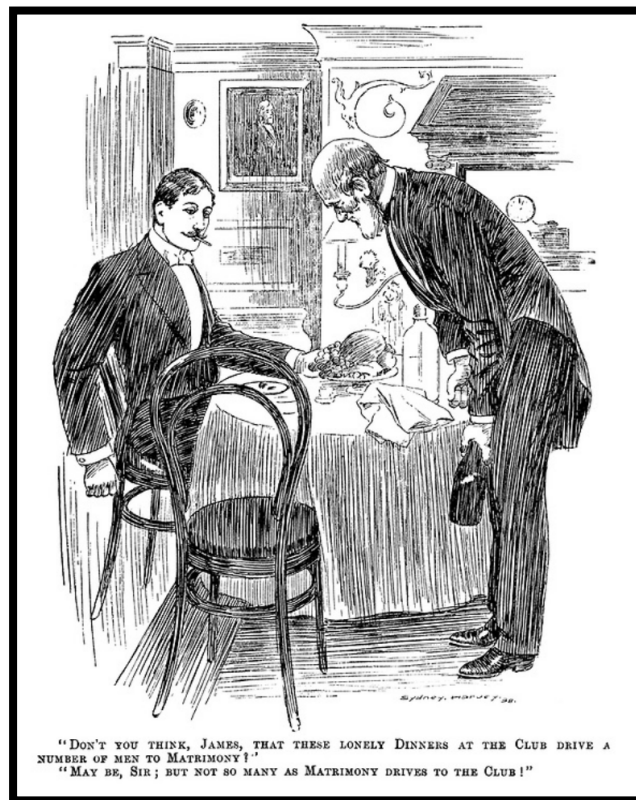


Fig. 14 Cartoon from Punch Magazine, 1898.

Text: 'Don't you think, James, that these lonely dinners at the club drive a number of men to matrimony?' 'May be, Sir; but not so many as matrimony drives to the club!'

© Punch Limited

²⁸¹ E. A. W. St. George, *The Descent of Manners: Etiquette, Rules & the Victorians* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 36.

²⁸² *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: Including the Etiquette of Weddings* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1894).

Being seen in the wrong circles, on the other hand, could have serious consequences for reputation and subsequently also one's social life, which is why public meeting places became less preferable. Coffee houses are one example of this. Day warns his reader: 'Never make acquaintances in coffee houses or other public places. As no person who respects himself does so, you may reasonably suspect any advances made to you'.²⁸³ A register of London coffee houses indeed shows that even though they were popular meeting places in the eighteenth century, a lot of them gradually began to close their doors in the nineteenth century.²⁸⁴

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, formerly public events were also starting to be subdivided according to rank. In Sheffield, for example, there had formerly been only one Anti-Corn Law association, a group where everyone could join who was opposed to this law which imposed tariffs and restrictions on imported grains. In 1840 then, a new group formed, which only granted access to gentlemen and fittingly called itself 'Sheffield's Gentlemen's Anti-Corn Law Association'.²⁸⁵ 'Now', the author of a newspaper article states, 'the fastidious Whigs may not run the risk of contamination' and need not worry about having 'been seen at the same table [... as] the industrious artisan who, although his heart be in the right place, has never studied Chesterfield nor pored over the scented pages of Hints on Etiquette'.²⁸⁶ Even though the author clearly reports satirically on these changes, his comment illuminates the pressures that were newly associated with sociability, and the important role etiquette could play in gaining access to society. Similar subdivisions were happening across the country, yet the Sheffield instance was possibly the most explicit example of linking the division to a lack of etiquette of the lower classes.

Places where different classes mixed generally became rarer and former opportunities were more strictly controlled. Almack's Ball, founded around the club's opening in the 1760, for

²⁸³ Day, *Hints on Etiquette* (1836), p. 15.

²⁸⁴ Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1963).

²⁸⁵ 'The Corn Laws', *Derby Mercury*, 25 November 1840.

²⁸⁶ 'The Corn Laws', *Derby Mercury*, 25 November 1840.

example, initially had a subscription service for ten guineas which would allow subscribers to attend the twelve balls hosted each season.²⁸⁷ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the admission process began to be more rigorously patrolled by seven lady patronesses who would only admit those who were already on their visiting lists, so that newcomers or outsiders simply stood no chance of buying tickets.²⁸⁸ Similarly, The Great Exhibition in 1851 proved itself to be an occasion not only to see inventions from all around the globe, but to see the equally fascinating spectrum of people of one's own country. The *Illustrated London News* commented: 'Among the many interesting spectacles which London will shortly offer to foreigners, none will be more interesting than the visits of these hordes of working-men—the men who made the Exhibition what it is, and who, we fervently hope, will derive the greatest advantages from it'.²⁸⁹ While attendance was not as formally restricted, the introduction of cheaper tickets soon after the exhibition opened was so that the lower class visits would mainly concentrate on one day, leaving the middle- and upper-classes (who would happily pay the full admission to avoid those lower down the social strata) to browse amongst their own on the other days.²⁹⁰

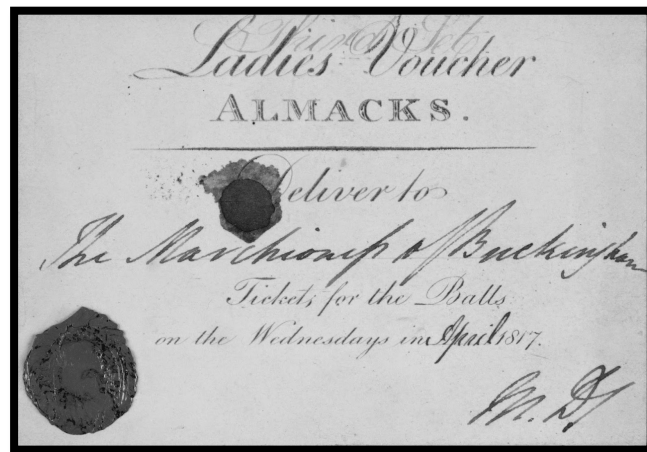


Fig. 15 Voucher to Almack's issued to Anna Elizabeth Grenville, Marchioness of Buckingham, in April 1817. © Huntington Library, California

²⁸⁷ Jane Rendell, 'Almack's Assembly Rooms: A Site of Sexual Pleasure', *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), 55.3 (2002), pp. 136–49 (p. 136).

²⁸⁸ Rendell, 'Almack's Assembly Rooms', p. 136.

²⁸⁹ "London during the Great Exhibition", *Illustrated London News*, 1851. Quoted in: Sabine Clemm, "Amidst the Heterogeneous Masses": Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 27.3 (2005), pp. 207–30 (p. 209).

²⁹⁰ Sabine Clemm, "Amidst the Heterogeneous Masses", p. 209.

In many ways then, these changed modes of sociability certainly helped to promote social closure. Curtin's findings ring true here: 'etiquette writers dwelled on rules which kept people apart, not those that brought them together'.²⁹¹ This emphasis is the opposite of the one Klein finds in conduct literature of the previous century: 'the literature on polite science reminds us that the label "polite" or "gentlemanly" in the eighteenth century denoted not the urge to exclude but rather an invitation for regulated participation by a fairly wide group of people'.²⁹² What becomes evident is that these cultural shifts discussed had translated into advice literature and produced a narrowing of the formal range of conduct literature of the eighteenth century and nineteenth centuries to the very prescriptive forms of etiquette literature circulating in increasing numbers from the mid-1830s.

A New Form of Guidance: Conduct vs. Etiquette

While etiquette literature shared undeniable similarities with the conduct literature of the previous century, in the manner in which they sought to counsel its readers on ideal behaviour, etiquette literature and conduct literature operated very differently on the page. The most significant change was that etiquette writers removed their advice from larger considerations of religion and morality, which had tended to be at least nominally (and often more than nominally) to the fore in conduct literature. The popular, strongly religious conduct manual *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), written by the Church of England clergyman Thomas Gisborne for example explained the contents of the work: 'the Power who called the human race into being has, with infinite wisdom, regarded, in the structure of the corporeal frame, the tasks which the different sexes were

²⁹¹ Curtin, *Propriety and Position*, p. 130.

²⁹² Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869–98 (p. 891).

respectively destined to fulfil'.²⁹³

Conduct literature of the eighteenth-century was itself indebted to the scripturally inspired Puritan moral advice literature of the previous century, which, though different in style, informed its key principles.²⁹⁴ Yet in the eighteenth century, religion was still an important component of the constellation of public as well as private life. Its influence was at points even mandated by law: the University's Tests Act abolishing religious tests for university entrance was only enacted in 1871; the Corporation Acts, for example, dictated that any person elected to run for some form of governmental post had to have received the Eucharist within the last twelve months. But great thinkers of the age also agreed with the fusion of faith, state, and society as a necessity: In 1736, William Warburton saw 'Religion [as] absolutely necessary to civil government', whereas David Hume noted in his *History of England* (1763) that 'the union of the civil and ecclesiastical power serves extremely [...] to the maintenance of peace and order'.²⁹⁵ It is therefore hardly surprising that religion extended its influence into conduct literature and sought to guide people's behaviour. In a typical eighteenth century statement it was said that good manners should be equally 'assisted by the *Christian* religion' just as the running of the state and the formation of society was.²⁹⁶ In comparison to this, the furthest etiquette manuals would go was to advise its readers that 'to treat recognised social observances with contempt is neither wise, nor kind, nor Christian-like'.²⁹⁷ Religion only features last in this list and seems to be another afterthought – a way to enforce etiquette rather than a guiding force.

²⁹³ Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1797), p. 19.

²⁹⁴ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500 - 1800* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 112.

²⁹⁵ William Warburton, *The Alliance between Church and State: Or, the Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test Law Demonstrated*. (London: A. Millar, and J. and R. Tonson, 1766), p. 24; and: David Hume, *History of England* (London: 1763), p. 311.

²⁹⁶ 'Of Good Manners', *London Magazine: Or, the Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, August 1731, pp. 330–31 (p. 330).

²⁹⁷ *Etiquette for Gentlemen; Being a Manual of Minor Social Ethics and Customary Observances* (London: Knight, 1857), p. 5.

Eighteenth century conduct books were in contrast, as Raven notes, ‘originally penned as instruments of practical religion’ and more often ‘addressed broad ethical problems rather than narrow questions of social behaviour’ as etiquette manuals would later go on to do.²⁹⁸ What is more, conduct manuals written up to and including the end of the eighteenth century, depicted that ‘manners and morals were inseparable and indistinguishable’, a trait which Marjorie Morgan sees as omnipresent in eighteenth-century advice literature.²⁹⁹ This was an assumption that gradually became more and more shaky at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and advice literature was soon split in different directions: on the one side stood religiously inspired works by writers such as Thomas Gisborne or Hannah More who fought for morality and on the other side were the first etiquette writers.³⁰⁰

St Clair writes that ‘in the romantic period the books invariably advise that genuinely good conduct must always derive from a pure heart, a sound understanding, and a respect for religion’.³⁰¹ Etiquette, on the other hand, was detached from these constrictions and allowed practice without concerns about religious commandments. This may be part of the reason why etiquette manuals would have struggled to find their place in eighteenth-century literary culture and a market led by moralising texts with publishers and lending libraries exercising strict control over new material.³⁰² In a study of conduct literature directed at female readers, Anthony Fletcher found that after 1740, far ‘less attention was devoted to the specifics of behaviour’, which would return to be the main narrative in etiquette literature.³⁰³

Etiquette guides taught their readers plenty about *appearing* a certain way (for example

²⁹⁸ Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, p. 101.

²⁹⁹ Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class*, p. 11.

³⁰⁰ Michael Curtin similarly sees a similar division in guidance literature, in which ‘manners contracted to etiquette [and] morals aspired to religious principle’. In: Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 4.

³⁰¹ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 275.

³⁰² Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, p. 101.

³⁰³ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500 - 1800* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 392.

generous/ sympathetic/ gracious and so on) but showed no real concern for the true moral condition of the reader. Even though guides such as *The Glass of Fashion* (1881) cautioned their readers against the ‘mania of keeping up appearances which prevails English society’, they simultaneously advised that ‘hundreds of pounds spent on the decoration of a dinner-table’ was a necessary expenditure if one wished to impress high-ranking guests.³⁰⁴

Good manners were no longer an indicator of good character, one could behave well but could have a character that was rotten to the core. Such is for example the case with Mr. Wickham in Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* (1813). On first glance, Mr. Wickham *appears* to be a perfect gentleman: ‘The officers of the ——shire were in general very creditable, gentlemanlike [...] but Mr. Wickham was as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk’.³⁰⁵ Yet it is not long after this assessment that he seduces the youngest Bennet sister Lydia to elope with him, plunging her whole family in despair. ‘Had his character been known, this could not have happened’, declares Mr. Darcy apologetically to Elizabeth.³⁰⁶ Mr. Darcy, whose ‘manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity’ on his first evening in the ——shire, saves Lydia’s honour by going after the eloped couple and induces Mr. Wickham to marry Lydia through a handsome sum.³⁰⁷ This literary example goes to show that perfect manners as well as the following of the rules of etiquette were no longer an indicator of the moral condition of one’s character. This appearance-centred culture, was, in Morgan’s words, fostered by ‘people’s increasing willingness to abandon the rigid moral and social distinctions to the sincere behaviour code’.³⁰⁸ Indeed, it seems like the former behavioural system had been replaced by one less internally compromising to follow, for which the removal of religion from wider discourse was a necessary measure, as it was the only

³⁰⁴ The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881) p. 329-20.

³⁰⁵ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 214.

³⁰⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 264.

³⁰⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 12.

³⁰⁸ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), p. 144.

hinderance to practising without morality. As William Adams fittingly put it: ‘the world judges us by our conduct; it has neither the time nor the inclination to study our character; moreover, it assumes that our conduct is necessarily the reflex of our character’.³⁰⁹

With the simplification and dissociation of frameworks such as religion or morality also came linguistic changes, which took the parental tone of conduct literature and replaced it with an impersonal narrative. *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) by ‘The late Dr Gregory of Edinburgh’ was a popular conduct manual of the period, and one of the texts had the highest print-runs in the eighteenth century.³¹⁰ It was a model for the tone of parental benevolence which ran through conduct literature: ‘The anxiety I have for your happiness has made me resolve to throw together my sentiments relating to your future conduct in life’.³¹¹ In four chapters on religion, conduct and behaviour, amusements, and friendship, love, and marriage, Gregory gave his daughters all the advice he thought they needed after his passing. As first physician in Scotland to George III, Gregory and his family certainly moved in aristocratic circles, yet his work is characterised by the benevolent tone of ‘a tender father’ who does not necessarily want a socially beneficial marriage for his daughters and would prefer them to be in a happy one.

Etiquette authors, on the other hand, expressed very different hopes for their readers. Charles William Day, author of *Hints on Etiquette*, aims to instruct all those ‘who do not know what is proper’ and would consider his goal achieved should he ‘save the blush upon [his readers] cheek[s]’, a stark deviation from Gregory’s narrative.³¹² What is more, Gregory never gives his daughters any specific rules to follow and only makes vague recommendations for their well-being.

A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters also demonstrates that behavioural advice occupied a

³⁰⁹ W. H. Davenport Adams, *Plain Living and High Thinking; or, Practical Self-Culture: Moral, Mental, and Physical* (London, 1880), p. 65.

³¹⁰ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 131. Sold at 3s, Dr Gregory’s letters were however priced to attract a privileged audience.

³¹¹ Dr Gregory of Edinburgh, *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* (Dunbar: G. Miller, 1803) p. 3.

³¹² Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society. Revised by a Lady of Rank*, 19th edition (London, 1839), p. v.

different space in eighteenth century culture and in the nineteenth century. Despite their immense success, neither Lord Chesterfield nor Dr Gregory ever intended to have their letters published. In Dr Gregory's case, his son sold the collection to a publisher a year after his father's death in 1773. By contrast, the behavioural advice given in etiquette manuals from the 1830s onwards was increasingly anonymous and openly divulged via etiquette guides or clippings of etiquette manuals in magazines and newspapers. In the eighteenth century, on the other hand, guidance on conduct was, when it was not directly linked to religion, part of the educational discourse from parents to their children and occupied the domestic rather than the public space. Gregory's book, as well as many other similar works of the period, can thus be grouped as 'domestic discourse', a term borrowed from the editor of Gregory's volume. 'In such domestic discourse', the preface reads, 'no sacrifices are made to prejudices, to customs, to fashionable opinions'.³¹³ Indeed, Gregory's work does not spend time on 'fashionable opinions', as etiquette manuals do, but recommends to his daughters the 'modest reserve [...] which avoids the public eye'.³¹⁴

Explicit encouragements to readers to live above their means or station in order to blend in with the *ton* can be found in every etiquette guide. Such procedural dogmatism is difficult to find in eighteenth-century conduct literature. Amanda Vickery notes that Georgian manuals often 'foster[ed] graceful interaction of unequals' with the principle of 'politeness introduc[ing] a little flexibility' to social frameworks.³¹⁵ In *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (1985), J.C.D. Clark went as far as to claim that until the 1830s, 'no body of theory and counsel existed in print to sanction and smooth the "rise" of any "middle class"'.³¹⁶ While this sweeping statement has been corrected by numerous historians, and can be easily dismissed simply by referring back to the earlier example of John Trusler, who aimed to

³¹³ Gregory, *A Father's Legacy*, p. iii.

³¹⁴ Gregory, *A Father's Legacy*, p. 16.

³¹⁵ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 53.

³¹⁶ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 105.

instruct young men cheaply via Chesterfield's maxims, it is nonetheless indisputable that the theme of social mobility and the prescription of class-specific behavioural codes are less explicitly addressed in eighteenth-century conduct books than in nineteenth century etiquette manuals.

With this change in explicitness and zeal also came a change in reading and usage. Etiquette publishers adopted already extant eighteenth-century print forms, most obviously the 'pocket books', guides designed as 'the practical complement to entertaining moral tales', and which gave direction on household management, cookery or religious matters such as praying schedules.³¹⁷ In its physical form as well, as discussed earlier, etiquette manuals therefore aimed at a certain practical usefulness for the readers' everyday lives that conduct literature did not envisage, or only had obliquely.

³¹⁷ James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) p. 273

CHAPTER III

The Etiquette Manual

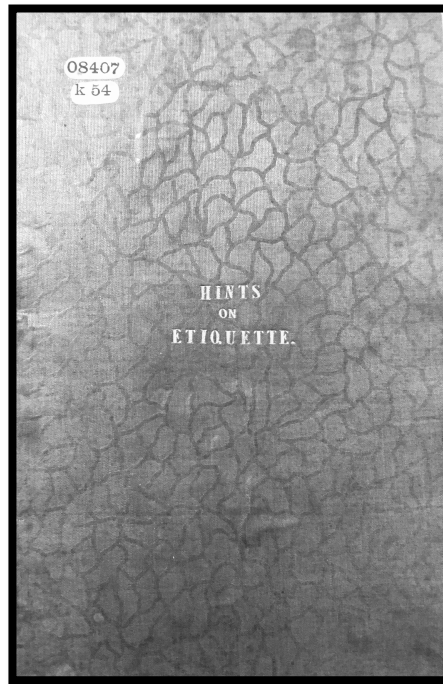


Fig. 16 Cover of the 1839 edition of Charles William Day's *Hints on Etiquette*
© British Library

In 1834, three years before Victoria would ascend the throne, a small pasteboard covered pamphlet appeared on the book market, authored by the enigmatic pseudonym Ἀγωγός (actually Charles William Day).³¹⁸ Its front had been worked to resemble leather and its edges were gilt to make it look expensive, though it sold for only sixpence. Three words were carefully stamped onto the cover in golden capitals: HINTS ON ETIQUETTE. While the pamphlet might from today's

³¹⁸ Agogos: the Greek word for (male) leader, guide.

perspective seem unremarkable in comparison to other publications of the time, it marked the consolidation of what would come to be a lasting genre in print: etiquette literature. With this publication, the tone was set for future publications, both in form as well as content; an etiquette manual would henceforth be understood as a concise guide that would, in short pragmatic sentences, advise its reader on the dos and don'ts of conduct in modern society. It was a form of literature that quickly found popularity: five years later, in 1839, *Hints on Etiquette*, now in its fifteenth edition, had expanded from 35 to 143 pages and competed for its market with many other similar guides (that had been sufficient for publishers to churn out around five new manuals a year).

The first part of this chapter examines the linguistic construction of etiquette drawing on the ideas of John R. Searle to show the mechanisms behind the creation of social reality in the text and to demonstrate why etiquette literature can be easily mistaken as descriptive (rather than prescriptive) literature. The analysis will show how the authors of etiquette literature lent weight to their subject matter through specific sets of language and narrative techniques. Through creating a version of social reality in which etiquette was the regulating entity, unquestionable and absolute, authors were able to provide legitimacy to the concept of etiquette. Additionally, the concept of etiquette promised stability and security in navigating a society in flux, and, if followed correctly (theoretical) upward social mobility.

The second part of the chapter builds on these findings and investigates how far upward social mobility (which etiquette guides claimed as their aim) was actually encouraged by the manuals. Though the premise of etiquette literature is relatively clear on first sight, reading more closely, it becomes apparent that though *assimilation* to the behaviour of the upper classes was encouraged, actual *integration* into the upper classes themselves was discouraged. Overall, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that etiquette was a form of literature (though marketed as a recipe for social success) which, through careful phrasing, constructed a restrictive society with a fixed social hierarchy on its pages and while seemingly encouraging social mobility, *actually* worked to

keep readers in their current place.

A problematic question in etiquette scholarship which should not be easily dismissed is the use of etiquette manuals as sources for social history. The problem of the existing scholarship is again twofold: when using advice literature, scholars have in the past been accused of taking its contents too literally, and consequently, have not given advice manuals much in-depth consideration. Jay Mechling is one of several historians who raise serious concerns about the use of advice literature in historical research, arguing that advice manuals do not tell us anything about actual behaviour of the time.³¹⁹ In more recent years, on the flipside, historians (such as Naomi Tadmor or Deborah Gorham) have made convincing cases for using conduct literature as a source, highlighting the oversights of previous decades of scholarship, while avoiding the pitfalls Mechling highlighted.³²⁰

While I in no way argue that etiquette manuals reflect the reality of Victorian times, I draw inferences from their style, their form (literary and physical) and their content which inform some of the key arguments of this chapter. Because even though manuals did not represent reality as such, the texts intersected and formed part of reality. This means that etiquette manuals not only existed, but they also described existing objects and concepts, either on a larger scale (i.e., the structure of society or socialising) or on a more palpable, smaller scale (i.e., table settings, clothing). In doing so, etiquette manuals walked a complex middle ground – they were neither exclusively reflecting reality nor exclusively fictional. Much like the rich panorama of realist fiction and *Bildungsromane*, emerging at the same time as etiquette manuals, they paid close attention to ‘the daily life into which people are born, and into which they are absorbed before they are well

³¹⁹ J. Mechling, ‘Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers’, *Journal of Social History*, 9.1 (1975), 44–63 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/9.1.44>>.

³²⁰ See: Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, Routledge Library Editions: Women’s History, Volume 19 (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).

aware'.³²¹ Etiquette manuals similarly captured the ideologies that permeated society and were based on reality. It is therefore important to make clear that though etiquette manuals were very much historically attuned to a specific point in time and place –early Victorian England–, its rendering was a form of ideological realism, rather than a reflection of reality.

As discussed in the Introduction, because etiquette literature was from the onset regarded as ephemeral, there is only little documentation still in existence. Deductions from the source itself therefore remain the most important material that is available to historians today, without which it would be impossible to answer some of the questions in this chapter or in this thesis. This chapter works with a variety of sources and, apart from etiquette manuals and historical documents, builds on different strands of scholarship: looking at book history, literary criticism, cultural history, and studies of historical social mobility. While the first section of the chapter presents the historical foundation for the emergence of etiquette literature, the second half delves deeper into the genre itself and provides a methodological basis for the rest of the thesis.

Hints on Hints on Etiquette

How did this new upstart class of manual distinguish itself from other conduct literature on the market? Simply put, the etiquette manual differed from all antecedent advice literature in style, content, and tone. Its characteristic short sentences, pragmatic directions and compact format led the way for other publications; so much so, that Charles William Day, the author of the volume which established the market for etiquette manuals, had to have his work protected from copyright-

³²¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, Ruth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) p. 4. Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and Charles Dickens are prime examples of the genre, as is Thomas Hardy later on. For further reading, see also: Mikhail Bakhtin, 'The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism: Toward a Historical Typology', *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern. W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986).

infringement in 1837, as many publications had cropped up which had blatantly plagiarised his work.³²²

With Day's manual enjoying huge market success, other publishers quickly emulated his text: eight publications cropped up in the following two years, very similar in form to *Hints on Etiquette*. The affordable price (on average sixpence) allowed many readers to buy (rather than borrow) a guide. *Hints on Etiquette*, which was priced also at sixpence, had sold 12,000 copies in the three years between 1834 and 1837, bringing in 'considerable profit'.³²³ Considering that London had a population of about 1.8m at that time, these sales numbers signify a sizeable success.

Hints on Etiquette was indeed so popular that it not only sold well and advertised regularly over a period of nearly sixty years but became a household name when it came to educating oneself in all things etiquette. A review in the *Morning Post* in 1840 for example called the manual 'invaluable' when it comes to mending bad habits and generally improving one's self.³²⁴ An 1841 newspaper article on 'Dining Out' similarly advised readers to 'have recourse to a *recherché* little work, entitled "Hints on Etiquette", which you purchase, and learn by heart'.³²⁵ It still retained this reputation almost fifteen years after its initial publication when it was featured in 'The Witch of Windermere', a play which ran for a few months in the late 1840s in Marylebone. In the play, Rose the 'village coquette' dreams of marrying a gentleman and therefore disregards the honest ploughboy Natty Primrose. Natty, however, does not give up, and instead 'studies with great assiduity "Hints on Etiquette" believing that by this means he will raise himself to Rose's standard of perfection'.³²⁶

³²² 'Hints on Etiquette - Injunction', *The Globe*, 14 July 1837.

³²³ 'Hints on Etiquette - Injunction', *The Globe*, 14 July 1837. Further discussion on the popularity of Day's manual can be found in: Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 40.

³²⁴ 'Hints on Etiquette - Review', *Morning Post*, 4 February 1840.

³²⁵ 'Dining Out', *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 29 July 1841.

³²⁶ 'Marylebone Theatre', *Morning Advertiser*, 5 December 1848.

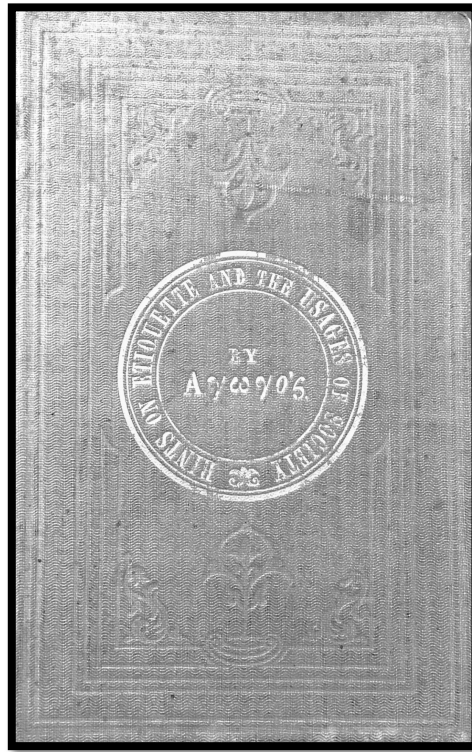


Fig. 17 Slightly more elaborate cover of *Hints on Etiquette* from 1843, now in its 19th edition with additions of a 'Lady of Rank'.
© British Library

In 1839 then, five years after its initial publication, the frontispiece of *Hints on Etiquette* claimed to have gone through its fifteenth edition. But Day's manual was not the large-font 35-page pamphlet it had been in 1834 any longer; it had turned into a pocket-sized, densely printed book which counted 143 pages. The changes this manual went through in the span of five years are remarkable and demonstrate the structural and stylistic refinements this new genre went through in a short space of time. The layout had been simplified and now included a table of contents, each laying out one area of etiquette such as dining, dressing, conversing or dancing. The formerly simple page layout was replaced by framed pages, resembling a rule book or decorative letterhead. The pragmatic yet still prosaic flow of writing of the first edition was replaced with short paragraphs, each containing one rule. The frontispieces epitomise this evolution; while the 1834 edition welcomed readers with the light-hearted quotation 'to make a purse out of a sow's ear', the 1839 edition chose the more serious maxim from Lord Chesterfield: 'manners make the

man'.³²⁷

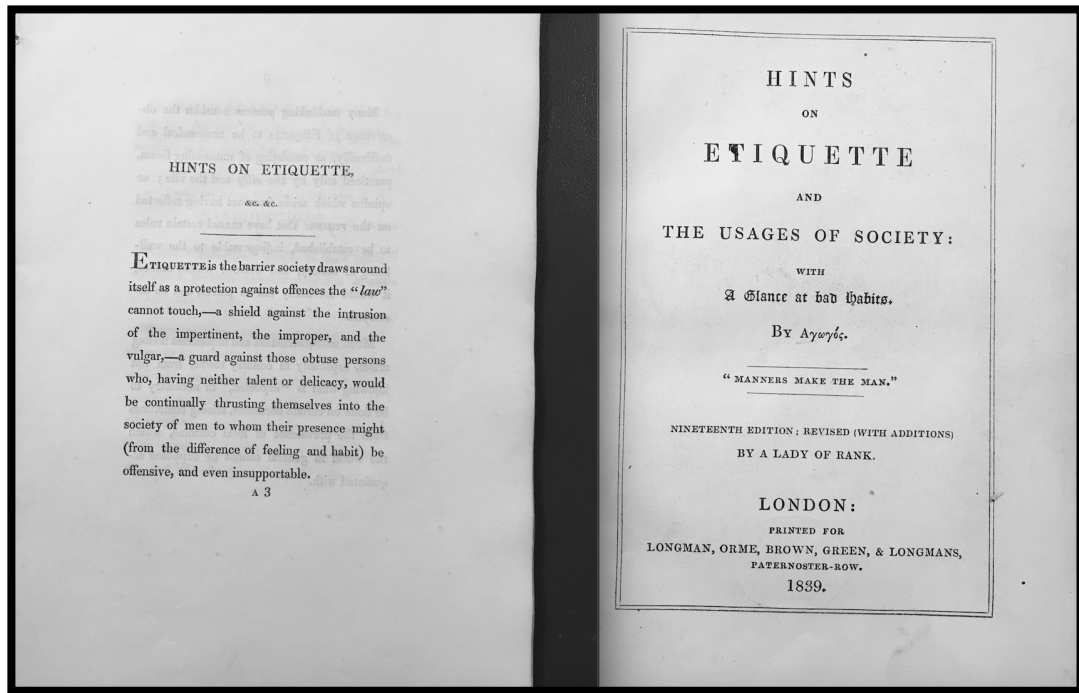


Fig. 18 Side-by-side comparison of the layout of the 1834 first edition (left) and the 1839 nineteenth edition (right) ©British Library

In the preface of his work, Day explains these changes by stating that he ‘found the usages “de la bonne société” somewhat changed after he returned from extensive travel (itself an assertion calculated to position him as a man *au fait* with the habits of the leisured classes) and wanted to adapt the work to current taste.³²⁸ While Day thus deserves credit for debuting and setting the tone for etiquette publications, their evolution into a homogenous genre was not entirely Day’s work, rather the result of many writers and publishers capitalising on the marketability of etiquette and readers’ eagerness to acquire instruction on the habits of good society.

³²⁷ Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society with a Glance at Bad Habits* (London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1834), p. ii; and: Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society. Revised by a Lady of Rank*, 19th edition (London, 1839), p. iv.

³²⁸ Day, *Hints on Etiquette*, 1839, p. 5.

The Etiquette Manual: Form Follows Function

Etiquette guides were designed to be practical, both in form as well as in function. Almost all etiquette manuals abided by a fixed format. Where conduct manuals in the eighteenth century had been written primarily in epistolary form, and in both prose or verse, nineteenth-century guides shed most of this literary finesse and morphed, with rare exceptions, into stylistically undemanding tracts. In one late-century etiquette writer's words, the manual form made 'no pretensions to be judged as a literary work — its sole merit depending upon its correctness and fitness of application'.³²⁹ Etiquette manuals indeed focused narrowly on the controllable aspects of social life and provided detailed descriptions of external conduct: social interactions, dress codes and other matters considered 'essential' for social success.

Individual manuals exhibited surprisingly little variation: much like Latin grammars, they set out their subject matter, then dissected it into neat rules to be studied by heart. Though manuals tended to be littered with foreign terms and loanwords, their writing style was in the main kept simple and largely stayed away from the complex syntax employed by the more esteemed novelists of the period. The author of *Social Observances* (1896) explains the etiquette book's format as 'easy of comprehension', so that 'it is the better calculated to impress its meaning upon the memory'.³³⁰ The layout most authors relied on was comprised of a short introduction, which set out the intention of the manual and highlighted the importance of etiquette, followed by individual chapters on areas of etiquette.

There was little more originality in narrative style than in the content and structure of etiquette writings, so that only very few stand out for their distinctive style or voice among the huge number of guides. The authors of etiquette manuals were well aware of the lack of originality

³²⁹ 'Au Fait', *Social Observances: A Series of Essays on Practical Etiquette* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1896), p. vi.

³³⁰ 'Au Fait', *Social Observances*, p. v.

of their writings and sometimes addressed this shortcoming, like the author of *Etiquette for Gentleman: With Hints on the Art of Conversation* (1838), who justifies the lack of originality as a mark of observational accuracy:

It is of course scarcely possible that anything *original* should be found in a brochure like the present: almost all it contains must have fallen under the notice of a gentleman who has been in the habit of frequenting good society.³³¹

Authors frequently borrowed from each other (though this was never admitted openly) and popular guides were sometimes reproduced in edited or shortened editions. Occasionally, the same manuals were even circulated both on the British and the American market despite authors commenting on the much-remarked differences in social behaviour and class. Yet the extent of the adjustment for the American market was the addition of a second preface that spoke to American readers and acknowledged possible differences in culture, such as what the author of *Etiquette for All Occasions* (1901) calls the ‘lack of aristocracy’ in American culture.³³²

In the first twenty years of Queen Victoria’s reign, etiquette manuals quickly became widely available and ranged considerably in price and size. Two formats dominated the market: pocket sized paper-bound guides priced relatively cheaply at around sixpence and elaborate thick volumes bound in leather with prices ranging from sixpence to four shilling.³³³ *Etiquette: How to Conform to the Rules of Society* (1850) is one of many surviving examples of a pocket manual. Priced at sixpence and measuring seven by eleven centimetres, the small paperbound guide promises to be ‘a complete exponent of propriety and manner in all the usages of society’ in a concise sixty pages.³³⁴ *Social Observances: A Series of Essays on Practical Etiquette* (1896) and the *Habits of Good Society* (1859) in contrast are 250-page volumes in ornate leather binding, heavily decorated with gold. Starting from

³³¹ *Etiquette for Gentlemen with Hints on the Art of Conversation*, 2nd Edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1838), p. v.

³³² Mrs Burton Kingsland, *Etiquette for All Occasions* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1901) p. 1.

³³³ Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England*, p. 21.

³³⁴ *Etiquette. How to Conform to the Rules of Society: A Complete Exponent of Propriety of Manner in All the Usages of Society, Manners, and Accomplishments*. (London: W. S. Johnson, 1850), p. iv.

at least one shilling, manuals as ornate as these would not necessarily be accessible to a lower middle-class audience, who would not be able to spend money on such a trifle, with a skilled worker on average earning 30s weekly in London in the 1830s.³³⁵ The physical appearance of the higher-price etiquette literature, with its elaborate bindings and beautiful illustrations, created a more niche market, giving these volumes the appearance of serious books of reference or high-brow literature. For instance, the ‘How’-Books published by Ward, Lock & Co. not only promised usefulness to prospective buyers but were also advertised as ‘bound in cloth, gilt edges, beautifully coloured Frontispieces’.³³⁶

The plurality in formats suggests also some degree of plurality in uses. Due to their elaborate and ornate nature, the more expansive volumes could have served decorative purposes or attracted sporadic contemplation in the family library. In the preface, *All about Etiquette; or, The Manners of Polite Society: For Ladies, Gentlemen, and Families* (1875) for example advertises itself as part of a collectable set, whose acquisition would itself be in keeping with etiquette: ‘a set of tastefully-bound hand-books of etiquette would be no inelegant addition to the book-case; and for those whose taste lies in this direction a set of eight has been prepared’.³³⁷ In *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*, Leah Price describes exactly this use of the book as a ‘fake book’, never read but displayed as a pretty spine or a sofa table album.³³⁸ The fact that so many expensive etiquette manuals were also advertised themselves as display books (such as *The Habits of Good Society* or *The Glass of Fashion*) furthermore indicates that it should be desirable to show that the household had a certain knowledge of etiquette, although it did not need to ‘study’ it, as admitting use of the

³³⁵ Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England*, p. 15.

³³⁶ Advertised in: *The Etiquette of Modern Society. A Guide to Good Manners in Every Possible Situation* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1881).

³³⁷ *All about Etiquette; or, The Manners of Polite Society: For Ladies, Gentlemen, and Families* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1875), p. vi.

³³⁸ Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 70.

pocket manuals would have suggested.³³⁹

The small (often pocket-sized) guides, on the other hand, of course had more practical purposes. The format easily fitted in a coat pocket or an evening bag; its size allowed discreet reading in one's palm so that in theory it could be carried to balls or other social outings. In either form, manuals were certainly not read cover to cover. Their encyclopaedic structure made it easy for readers to consult them on particular topics of need. Records of ownership and marks of use tell us that etiquette manuals were not always bought by the readers themselves but were also given as gifts. The publisher's description of *Etiquette for the Ladies: Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, for example, chronicles etiquette's emergence as a gifting idea: while advertisements in 1837 list the manual quite randomly among dictionaries and other miniatures, in 1846, a new edition appeared among a selection of other works grouped as 'New and Popular Books for Presents'.³⁴⁰

The bibliographic and physical forms of etiquette manuals diversified throughout the Victorian period, but their content remained surprisingly unvaried. Seemingly oblivious to social advancements of the period, etiquette manuals continued to advertise a very similar view of the rules offering access to society in the 1890s to those set out in the 1840s and 1850s. While many later editions of manuals claim to have been updated and adjusted to the manners of the present day, this was largely a marketing ploy. The commercial material produced around *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: Including the Etiquette of Weddings* which appeared thirty years after its initial publication in 1894, for example, claims to have 'been brought up to the present time in every

³³⁹ See: *The Habits of Good Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1868); and *The Lounger in Society, The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881).

³⁴⁰ In: *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837); and *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 33rd edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1846).

respect³⁴¹, however, this ‘revision’ extended to only very minimal changes.

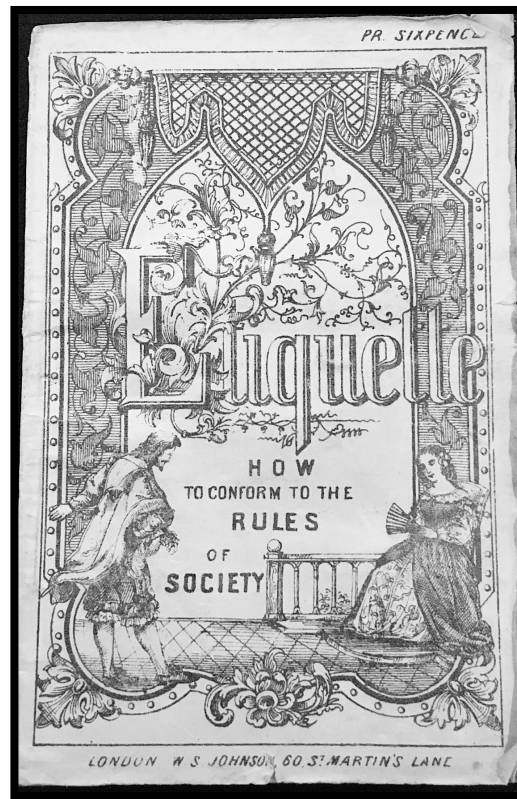


Fig. 19 Cover of *Etiquette: How to Conform to the Rules of Society: A Complete Exponent of Propriety of Manner in All the Usages of Society, Manners, and Accomplishments* (London: W. S. Johnson, 1852), an example of a pocket manual. © British Library.

No matter the format or intended market, the descriptions of individual social situations and behavioural requirements in the manuals remained, in the main, ostensibly objective and relatively neutral in tone. There was no plot or identifiable characterisation, but rather a general account of upper-class mores and of what ‘you’, the reader, should do in any given context, without dramatic embellishment. At points, authors would give examples or recall anecdotes to illustrate a rule – a device which helped them assert themselves as an experienced source, qualified to help the reader foresee the circumstances in which a rule could be applied practically. The author

³⁴¹ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: Including the Etiquette of Weddings* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1894), p. v.

of *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette* (1875) for example writes that 'a gentleman should always be so well dressed that his dress shall never be observed at all'.³⁴² The author elucidates this principle by recounting: 'If any friend should say to you, "What a handsome waistcoat you have on!" you may depend that a less handsome waistcoat would be in better taste' leading to the conclusion that, 'display, in short, is ever to be avoided'.³⁴³ Cautionary tales of people being excluded from social gatherings for incorrect behaviour were also used, but more rarely. While most eighteenth-century conduct guides used such tales as a trope to indirectly illuminate a potential faux pas while crediting their reader with greater discernment, etiquette guides of the nineteenth century addressed readers directly and advised them in a straight-forward didactic manner on what should not be done. The phrasing tended to be short, to the point, and often monitory: 'never introduce morning visitors to each other'.³⁴⁴

Alongside plain instruction and social guidance, etiquette manuals provided an additional pleasure for their readers: the satisfaction of cultural curiosity and imaginative escapism. Many sections of an etiquette guide were likely to be of little use to most readers who would for example lack the necessary budget and staff to throw an elaborate dinner party on the scale described in the manual. Especially detailed sections on being introduced at a *court levee* were probably meant to give the reader a pleasurable glimpse of an otherwise inaccessible world. The twenty-page chapter 'At Court' in *The Glass of Fashion* perfectly illustrates this theory. At first, the author matter-of-factly describes the social function of court presentation: 'presentations at court are valued because they place the persons favoured within the charmed circle of fashionable society and confer upon them a definite social position'.³⁴⁵ This statement is followed by specific information (delivered in the third person singular), on when and where these presentations happen, how to dress and so forth. When it comes to describing the protocol of the presentation itself, the narrative point of view

³⁴² *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette*, p. 47.

³⁴³ *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette*, p. 47.

³⁴⁴ *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette*, p. 36.

³⁴⁵ *The Glass of Fashion*, p. 239.

dramatically changes to the first-person plural:

At last our turn comes, and we enter the main saloon, adjoining the Throne Room. Here we wait once more [...] and enjoy a novel and stirring spectacle. [...] Looking around us, we observe many faces made familiar to us by the art of the photographer and the engraver. [...] But a movement now takes place towards the barrier on the left [...] we proceed in due order through the door, and then round to the right stands Royalty, attended by a glittering suite. We are conscious of the presence of a handsome and somewhat portly personage, with a good-humoured countenance, a tawny moustache and beard, but considerable baldness on top of the head. Our name is read out loud from our card; we make a respectful obeisance; and are received with a pleasant smile and slight bow.³⁴⁶

While such elaborate reader-inclusive passages do not appear often in etiquette writings, they are a common stylistic device in the literature, and the recourse to them here encourages the speculation that etiquette writers not only aimed at educating their readers on social conduct, but also meant to appeal to their inquisitiveness. The linguists Gabriele Diewald and Elena Smirnova, make the general point that the use of the pronoun ‘we’ in such ways creates a sense of a ‘community of peers’, which directly ‘include[s] the reader, who is called upon to witness, alongside the author, the facts described’.³⁴⁷ The large majority of the audience would quite possibly never have had the chance to move in courtly circles, but the etiquette author provides a solution: the inclusivity of the language allows the reader to inhabit the fantasy of actually being presented at court and meeting the Queen, effectively making the etiquette manual a ticket into an imagined world of aristocracy for those who would, in real life, never be admitted.

Etiquettymology

The term and practice of ‘etiquette’ had certainly found its way into discourse long before the first print run of an etiquette manual. In Jane Austen’s *Sense & Sensibility* (1811) for example, etiquette

³⁴⁶ *The Glass of Fashion*, pp. 243-247.

³⁴⁷ *Linguistic Realization of Evidentiality in European Languages*, ed. by Gabriele Diewald and Elena Smirnova, Empirical Approaches to Language Typology, 49 (Berlin: New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010), p. 292.

becomes a necessary tool for courting. When the Colonel proposes marriage to Elinor, he apologises for the ‘badness of his house’.³⁴⁸ Elinor wonders ‘at his thinking it necessary to do so; but suppose[s] it to be the proper etiquette’.³⁴⁹ Literary examples such as this one show that while deference to etiquette was a recognizable social phenomenon in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the rules had not yet been universalised and systemised as they would come to be in the 1830s with the rise of etiquette literature. How widespread ‘Victorian’ etiquette as a concept was, is further emphasised through a targeted search in *The British Newspaper Archive*. Whereas the word “etiquette” only yields 1,446 results between the years of 1750-1799 (less than a total of thirty mentions per year on average) with its rarity also showing the way in which the term is used in a less precise and interchangeable way in this earlier period, this number grows to 33,334 results between 1800-1849 and a startling 173,721 results in the years between 1850-1899. While still taking into account that the number of publications of all types expanded rapidly, these numbers nonetheless suggest the very great currency of the concept of etiquette in the period.

One could summarise the aim of etiquette guides very simply as teaching people how to behave ‘correctly’. In one Victorian etiquette writer’s words, etiquette was a literature that ‘professes to analyse those traditionary laws which [...] exercise a great influence on the right ordering of society’.³⁵⁰ While this objective is obvious to anyone who leafs through a manual, there are deeper facets of etiquette literature which escape superficial notice – facets which give the manuals an interest beyond their reputation for being a trivial and sometimes cynically profiteering literature pedalled by publishers to aspirational readers.³⁵¹ This part of the chapter will explore

³⁴⁸ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Broadview Literary Texts (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2001), p. 293.

³⁴⁹ Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 293.

³⁵⁰ *Etiquette, Social Ethics and the Courtesies of Society* (London: Wm. S. ORR & Co., Amen Corner, 1854), p. v.

³⁵¹ This is for example reflected in: Abraham Hayward, ‘Codes of Manners and Etiquette’, *The Quarterly Review*, 1837, pp. 395-439 and Croker John Wilson, ‘Miss Martineau’s Morals and Manners’, *The Quarterly Review*, 1839, pp. 61-63. Both of these reviews are discussed in more detail in Chapter I.

these facets as a way of defining the genre.

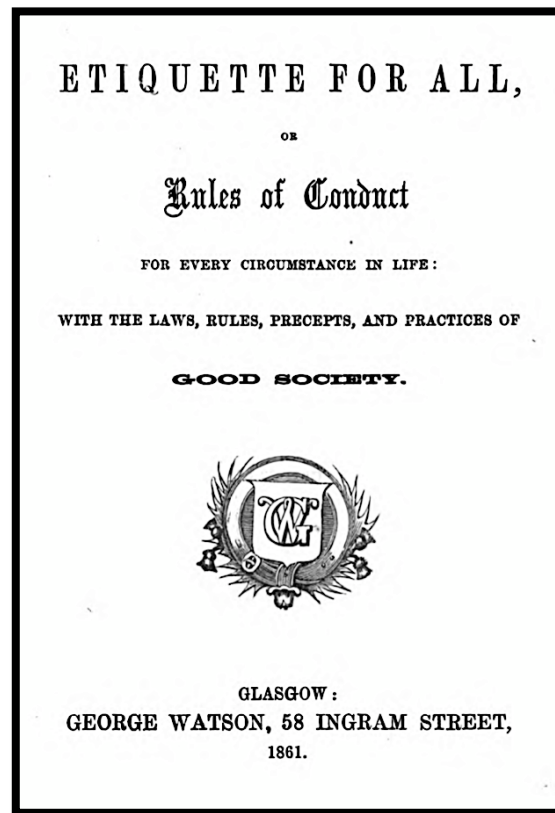


Fig. 20 The simplistic frontispiece of *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (1861)

One of those less obvious features of the literature and its definition of the term ‘etiquette’ was that etiquette was treated by those marketing it not only as a set of rules, but (in many if not all cases) also as a means of absolute social regulation. Etiquette writers did not shy away from making bold claims about their subject matter, and generally asserted that etiquette played a crucial role in the good functioning of society, absorbing formerly separate concepts such as ‘Politeness or Good-breeding’, as one etiquette author states.³⁵² The title of the manual from which these quotations are taken, *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (1861), reveals more of the complexity of the term: not

³⁵² *Etiquette for All*, p. 5.

only are there generally applicable rules to be followed, there are also laws, precepts and practices to be adhered to. It soon becomes clear to the reader that etiquette encompasses a wider range of social behaviour than might initially be thought; the author of *The Glass of Fashion* (1881), for example, understood etiquette ‘to mean something more than those conventionalities of manners which are commonly called politeness’, ‘embrac[ing]’, in fact, a whole social system.³⁵³ In short, etiquette literature offered to give outsiders access to that system, by making implicit rules explicit.

Another important characteristic of etiquette literature is that its sole aim was not only to provide instruction in good behaviour for altruistic reasons, but also to prepare readers to rise in society. Indeed, authors of manuals typically combined the literal meaning of the word (‘ticket, label’) with the figurative meaning (‘polite behaviour, ceremonial’) and presented the concept of etiquette as a ‘ticket’ to society—an explicit rendering of that society’s interior contents or practices in order to enable mobility from the middling classes to a more fashionable elite. The unusually purple-prosing author of *Always: A Manual of Etiquette for the Guidance of Either Sex into the Empurpled Penetralia of Fashionable Life* (1884), who calls himself ‘Mentor’, explains that ‘the word etiquette’ signifies ‘literally, a ticket of admission [...] it means a conversance with those forms of good-breeding that shall serve you as a season-ticket, or passport, into the roseate atmosphere of Good Society’.³⁵⁴

Etiquette literature concentrated on moulding the ‘aspirational youth’ into a figure supposedly fit to participate in upper class society.³⁵⁵ Unlike earlier conduct manuals and treatises, up to and including those published in the late eighteenth century, etiquette guides in the Victorian

³⁵³ The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881), p. v.

³⁵⁴ ‘Mentor’, *Always: A Manual of Etiquette for the Guidance of Either Sex into the Empurpled Penetralia of Fashionable Life* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1884), p. 3.

³⁵⁵ ‘Mentor’, *Always*, p. 4.

era concentrated almost exclusively on social protocol.³⁵⁶ Typically, they omitted the cultivation of individual accomplishments, such as intellectual past-times or charitable deeds, as well as religious matters. Self-improvement in etiquette literature was thus almost exclusively limited to improving oneself in a social environment. As Michael Curtin says in *Propriety and Position* (1987), still the most cited historical account on etiquette manuals, ‘courtesy treated man broadly in society, etiquette focused narrowly on sociability’.³⁵⁷

Managing sociability indeed became the driving aim of etiquette manuals, which focused on prescribing a specific set of behavioural rules suitable for ever more specific social settings, omitting explicit moral or spiritual discussion from discourse almost completely. Instead, authors relied for their audience appeal on topics such as the formal social introduction, dress, formal dining and balls, all ostensibly as practised in the world of the fashionable set and the aristocracy. Each topic had a dedicated chapter and some later manuals included indices for individual subsections of their topics, so that readers could quickly find the guidance relevant for a specific situation. *Etiquette of Good Society* (1880), for example, divides the chapter on ‘Balls’ into nineteen specific subsections:

Seasons for Balls—Dances—Different Styles—Public Balls—How to Manage them—Tickets—Introductions—Duties of Stewards—Fancy Dress Balls—Private Balls—Rooms necessary—Music—Lights—Decorations—Cloak Rooms—Tea, Drawing and Ball Rooms—Card Room—Duties of the Entertainers to their Guests—Of Partners to their Partners³⁵⁸

While some aspects of life were thus explained in excruciating detail, other areas were left markedly untouched. Religion and politics are the two areas of social life whose absence can be most obviously felt in the genre of etiquette. A section from *Talking and Debating; or, Fluency of Speech Attained, without the Sacrifice of Elegance and Sense* (1856), entitled ‘Objectionable subjects’

³⁵⁶ A more extensive discussion of how etiquette differs from eighteenth-century treatises can be found in ‘Chapter I: Why Etiquette, Why Then?’.

³⁵⁷ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 32.

³⁵⁸ *Etiquette of Good Society*, (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1880), p. 164.

explains: 'There are certain subjects that should never be introduced in general conversation, however fit they may be for the consideration of friends' tête-à-tête. Religious matters are at all times unfit', as are 'politics', which the author considers 'dangerous and [which] should be avoided as much as possible'.³⁵⁹ The author of *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette* (1875) agrees that 'religion' is 'a topic which should never be introduced into society' yet remains silent on politics.³⁶⁰

Religion, politics, and matters of intellectual and ethical substance more generally found no place in the self-contained, socially concentrated universe etiquette guides created, in which social success was valued above anything else. There are but few exceptions of manuals which did comment on religion or politics, and none of them spent entire chapters on the subject or gave it more or equal importance to the rest of the content. The omissions were, of course, as self-serving on the part of the authors as they were enabling to the nervous entrant to society: any discussion of politics or religion would surely have put etiquette writers' claim to authority and neutrality into question. The neglect of talking about religion or politics, combined with the authoritative style writers adopted to describe the facts of an aristocratic lifestyle, gave the reader the impression that etiquette had the power to govern the social sphere and that it was the reliable practical path to a (socially) successful life. Yet most importantly, these omissions also add to the notion that etiquette was an entity which had the power to regulate society.

Throughout etiquette manuals, upper-class society is depicted as an almost otherworldly sphere of perfection and the aristocratic lifestyle is proclaimed as the model of decorum and taste that one should strive to emulate. At the same time, the manuals clearly aimed at facilitating social interactions for all their readers. The promise that etiquette will serve as a ticket which enables one to inhabit a higher place in society, and (if occasion arises) to move with ease among those of more exalted rank, is a recurrent feature of the literature: 'with [etiquette], you are at princely ease,

³⁵⁹ *Talking and Debating; or, Fluency of Speech Attained, without the Sacrifice of Elegance and Sense* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1856), p. 8.

³⁶⁰ *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1875), p. 43.

without it, you are in loutish embarrassment', writes 'Mentor'.³⁶¹ Etiquette writers routinely warned that adherence to their advice was of the utmost importance, as only those who followed the rules and maxims closely were fit to participate in the best circles. This dictatorial ethos is exemplified in the preface to *Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (1860):

In order to enjoy polite society, and to be thoroughly suited for it, we must have a knowledge of those rules and regulations which the custom and common consent of well-bred people have established and drawn up into a kind of social code, entitled Etiquette.³⁶²

Yet, as the author of *The Habits of Good Society* (1859) comments, an underlying theme in the guides is that 'society is [...] the intercourse of persons on a footing of equality'.³⁶³ As with Mr Collins in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), who, in his role as clergyman, offends against decorum by pretending parity with gentlemen far above his station, such errors could lead to ridicule or even social exclusion. Manuals were very careful to tell their readers not to cause offence by approaching persons of higher rank, which was considered a shocking faux pas. Etiquette would not only alert you to the possibility of such a mishap, but it would also actively save you from it. But the general message could not be simple social and class conservatism and restriction. 'Training in etiquette is all that is required to make a high-bred lady', writes another author, clearly implying that etiquette is a tool to enable one to *pass as* a person above one's own station.³⁶⁴ With the help of etiquette, one could, theoretically, swindle one's way in. In reality, doing so was no easy matter, as manners were not the only obstacle to social mobility: a healthy budget, *inter alia*, was also needed to supply the relevant furnishings for social success.

So, as is obvious, there was a dual message in the manuals. They suggested that learning the rules could allow one to mix with or rise into higher levels of society. But also seeking in some

³⁶¹ 'Mentor', *Always*, p. 3.

³⁶² *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 5.

³⁶³ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen*. (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 28.

³⁶⁴ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1876), p. 10.

ways to reinforce the existing social hierarchy – of course the focus of their readers’ aspirations – was a vital function of the narrative of etiquette, though often masked beneath the seemingly benevolent intentions of the authors. When etiquette manuals emerged on the book market, it was a point in time when the hierarchical class structure of Georgian and early Victorian England was becoming increasingly fluid. The middle classes had gradually entered political life (most notably through the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867) and had gained greater economic power brought by industrialisation and trade, factors which threatened the existing structures of society, and, importantly for this study, the parameters which had previously been necessary to participate in ‘good society’. As Leonore Davidoff notes in *The Best Circles*, the beginning of the Victorian Age saw a ‘reinterpretation of society’ and ‘how to gain access to that society’.³⁶⁵ Etiquette manuals certainly document this ‘reinterpretation’: they articulate an aspiration to class mobility with new frankness and pragmatism, and enable their readers to negotiate the complexities of a social system in flux: ‘in the present day, when the distinctions of rank are becoming constantly less marked’, writes the author of *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1876), ‘the circles of good society are [...] constantly receiving into themselves a man who has risen from the cottage or the workshop [...] with] the knowledge of these social laws’ of etiquette.³⁶⁶ Though as we have seen in the close reading above, statements such as these could be more for the benefit of positive marketing rather indicative of actual circumstances.

The etiquette writers’ consistent promotion of aristocratic manners was thus double edged in its political implications: from one perspective, it was a means by which the notion of the upper classes’ superiority was fostered and preserved. Controlling the potentially threatening new competition from below by imposing upper class behavioural codes on them, etiquette manuals became a vehicle which helped the aristocracy to stay at the top of, if not necessarily the economic,

³⁶⁵ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 22.

³⁶⁶ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen*, pp. 9-10.

at least, the social ladder. But from another perspective, etiquette manuals, in making explicit the codes and procedures by which the higher social ranks operated, enabled an understanding of polite sociability as just a set of conventions, capable of easy mastery if one chose to apply oneself.

The Social Reality of Etiquette

In his essay ‘Some Thoughts Concerning Education’ (1693), John Locke remarked: ‘Manners [...] are rather to be learned by example than rules’.³⁶⁷ Less than 150 years later, Locke’s dictum was turned on its head when etiquette manuals started to teach manners via sets of rules. Following a long tradition of advice literature, etiquette literature, taking a new format and style, made its entrance in the 1830s. It was a literature which claimed to have the aim to improve the manners of its readers through teaching them what writers termed ‘etiquette’, effectively sets of rules which applied to specific social situations like dining, introducing, courting, and even mourning. Etiquette literature also promised its readers social success, that is, to achieve upward social mobility and social acceptance, if they followed the rules set out in the compact often pocket-sized manuals. The ‘language of etiquette’ was distinctive and differed markedly from advice literature of previous decades and centuries. Guides moved away from the parental tone of eighteenth-century guides and replaced it with an authoritative and neutral tone reminiscent of the literatures of science or law, often almost commanding readers rather than advising them.

The linguistics of etiquette are integral to the understanding of this cultural and social and literary phenomenon. In an extensive study on narratology, Uri Margolin made the general observation that appropriate language is in fact the narrator’s means of access to his readers’ minds. ‘The narrator’s language’, he writes, ‘will have decisive influence on our assessment of his credibility and ultimately on how much of what he claims about the narrated domain we are ready

³⁶⁷John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. J. W. and J. S. Yolton (Oxford, 1989), p. 124.

to accept'.³⁶⁸ Though rule centred as they were, these manuals were also narrative texts, telling a story about life among the *ton*. The narration of etiquette manuals achieves credibility precisely through linguistic means that (sub-)consciously are supposed to resonate with the readers' perception of reality and factuality, so that they accept the manual's content as true and are more likely to follow its advice. Vocabulary and syntax, as we will see, play an important part in this bid for credibility and were carefully selected for impact. Interestingly, it is a phenomenon that Olivia Smith has picked up on in a slightly different context. Smith identifies significant changes in the linguistic field of 'society', at the turn of the eighteenth century. Society was, in her words, 'largely a realistic concept, establishing a terrain in which vocabulary and syntax distinguished the refined and civilized from the vulgar and the savage'.³⁶⁹ The same could be said for etiquette literature which operated similar mechanisms of distinction, expressed through specific strategies of language. While Andrew St George claims that 'the etiquette book became the informal social legislation which governed the way people thought about meeting and communication with each other', my argument in this chapter remains in the realm of etiquette manuals rather than actual reality.³⁷⁰ It therefore does not investigate reader reception but takes one step back to look at the structure, the mechanisms and aims of the literature first.³⁷¹

If one did not know better, it would be easy to assume etiquette manuals described Victorian society. This is mostly due to the language etiquette writers employed. In multiple ways, etiquette writers managed to make their subject and world view credible to the extent that it might influence the reader's perception of the social reality. In doing so, authors lent their subject matter legitimacy and weight. What is more, they articulated a version of a rapidly changing nineteenth-century society in which there was stability and clear regulation.

³⁶⁸ Peter Hühn, *Handbook of Narratology* (Berlin [u.a.: de Gruyter, 2009), p. 656.

³⁶⁹ Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. vii.

³⁷⁰ E. A. W. St. George, *The Descent of Manners: Etiquette, Rules & the Victorians* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 45.

³⁷¹ Reader reception is discussed in detail in Chapter I.

The theories of John R. Searle help us to understand how the construction of a credible version of social reality is achievable through language. For Searle, objects or concepts within a social reality necessitate three components in order to be accepted as real by the human mind:

1. The Assignment of Function
(The allocation of a clear purpose)
2. Collective Intentionality, and
(The communal agreement on goals and constituents)
3. Constitutive Rules.
(The individual rules which make up the concept)³⁷²

If these three requirements are met, we can perceive a statement as congruent with reality. Etiquette authors fulfilled all these three requirements, and a closer look demonstrates how multi-layered etiquette manuals actually were and the important role their language played.

The first requirement, the ‘assignment of function’, is easy enough to determine in the case of etiquette manuals and often is made clear in the first few sentences of the preface or introduction. *Mixing in Society* (1870) in its very first sentence declares etiquette a ‘social requirement’.³⁷³ Etiquette’s function as the regulation of society and a point of access to that society is laid out across manuals. ‘A knowledge of those social observances is absolutely indispensable for all who aspire to live in society’, continues the author of *Mixing in Society*.³⁷⁴ It is a sentiment echoed by many other etiquette writers. Without exception a knowledge of etiquette is said to be essential, with any given manual promising that it ‘may be accepted in all its detail as an unquestionable authority’.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, in the world of etiquette manuals, the aristocracy provides the social lead which needs to be followed by all: ‘All of us must admit that Etiquette is omnipotent with the generality of mankind, and that he who would mix with his kind with pleasure to himself and to those whose society he seeks [sic], must own her sway and submit to her laws’,

³⁷² John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 13.

³⁷³ Countess of ******, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. v.

³⁷⁴ *Mixing in Society*, p. vii.

³⁷⁵ *Social Observances*, p. v.

writes the author of *Etiquette for All* (1861).³⁷⁶ Etiquette is presented as an encoding of social rules which has powerful mechanisms at its disposal and can control the social fortunes of an individual. *The Glass of Fashion* (1881) for example uses part of the quotation from Edmund Burke seen earlier to affirm this: ‘Manners are of more importance than laws... the law touches us here and there, now and then [...] manners give their whole form and colour to our lives’.³⁷⁷ In this way, authors gave their manuals authority, value and a clear purpose to exist in the first place: to describe society and its regulation, make it understood to the readers and, ideally, with their newfound understanding, enable them to access the society described.

Secondly, Searle’s term ‘collective intentionality’ refers to a body of individuals who ‘engage in cooperative behaviour’ and ‘share intentional states such as beliefs, desires, and intentions’.³⁷⁸ A simple example of this would be a cellist playing their part in a performance of a symphony. Etiquette writers similarly worked (independently) together in that they used the same parameters to define and delineate etiquette in their respective works. Though there was of course variation between individual guides, there are plenty of facts which the whole corpus of etiquette literature agreed on, the most important ones being:

- (a) Etiquette is a set of rules detailing behaviour for set circumstances
- (b) Etiquette is a portrayal of the manners of the aristocracy
- (c) Etiquette needs to be observed in society
- (d) The use of etiquette can bring social benefits such as respectability or upward social mobility

These factors consistently featured as the building blocks of etiquette literature. Not only were these statements implicit in different manuals of the 1830s, but they also remained consistent for

³⁷⁶ *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (Glasgow: George Watson, 1861) p. 6.

³⁷⁷ The Lounger in Society, *The Glass of Fashion: A Universal Handbook of Social Etiquette and Home Culture for Ladies and Gentlemen. With Copious and Practical Hints Upon the Manners and Ceremonies of Every Relation in Life at Home, in Society, and at Court* (London: John Hogg, Paternoster Row, 1881), p. vii.

³⁷⁸ Searle, *Construction of Social Reality*, p. 23.

the whole period of inquiry between 1834 and the 1890s. In this way, etiquette offered to provide stability and consistency within the existing social structure. Etiquette literature was churned out in large quantities by publishers in the middle decades of the century, but the underlying frameworks and rules (apart from minute changes) remained the same, giving the impression that social norms remained unchanged over the decades.

The third and last component Searle deems necessary are constitutive rules. In order to break down this last component, Searle differentiates between ‘brute facts’, which are given, natural occurrences independent of human opinion, such as snow at the top of Mount Everest, and ‘institutional facts’, which in turn stem from man-made institutions such as money, marriage or property.³⁷⁹ Constitutive rules are necessary in order to make an institutional fact work. To return to the example of money: the main constitutive rules in this case are that a printed piece of paper has monetary value, certain coins and bills have a greater value than others and money can be exchanged for goods or services. Etiquette can, similarly to money, be seen as an institutional fact in that it is dependent on man-made concepts such as society, gender and class. The examples above ((a)-(d)) are constitutive rules of etiquette that are collectively agreed on, but there are also other constitutive rules which might not be universal. *The Hand-book of Etiquette* (1860) for example states that the hours for ‘Morning Calls’ are between two and five pm, whereas the *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1876) insists that morning calls should not be paid before 3pm.³⁸⁰ A variation in etiquette might occur at the same point in time or over the course of time – either way differences do not detract from the credibility of etiquette. The important thing is that the building blocks that are collectively agreed on are respected, but the individual constitutive rules may differ. There may be different ways of obeying etiquette, the important thing generally being that one has

³⁷⁹ Searle, *Construction of Social Reality*, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 8. *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1876), p. 16.

to follow the rules which *constitute* etiquette, otherwise one is not following etiquette.³⁸¹ By using a fish knife to eat your fish, for example, you are respecting a constitutive rule of the society, ergo following etiquette.

By obeying these three components Searle outlines, etiquette manuals manage to create a credible version of social reality on their pages. It also becomes apparent that etiquette authors used specific sets of language to persuade readers of their version of social reality, which though grounded in the structures of reality, was not realistic. While this shows authors committed to presenting their belief in this world and its structures to their readers, marketing also cannot be taken out of the equation, however, as the more credibly and realistically authors and publishers presented their subject, the more likely readers were to want to familiarise themselves with the concept.

Another feature which contributed to the authority of etiquette was the mechanism of interaction between reader and manual. In the preface (generally written in a welcoming and benevolent tone) the reader was lured in by promises: manuals for example offered help in navigating society or invited the reader to glimpse at the world of the aristocracy. Yet as soon as the chapters on individual topics start, readers were quickly subjected to something more like a student-teacher-relationship. Authors took readers by the hand and explained things step by step. In leaving little to the imagination, often giving an extraordinary number of rules for any circumstance, etiquette manuals provided at once a sense of arcane difficulty to be mastered and a sense of security to the reader. Take, for example, this section on glove wearing, which highlights the intricacies to be observed and warns of the ‘vulgarity’ one could provoke by not following the rules precisely:

It is not considered proper for ladies to wear gloves during dinner. To appear in public without them—to sit in church or in a place of public amusement destitute of these appendages, is

³⁸¹ Searle, *Construction of Social Reality*, p. 28.

decidedly vulgar. Some gentlemen insist on stripping off their gloves before shaking hands; – a piece of barbarity, of which no lady will be guilty.³⁸²

Though etiquette was a concept that was, if one believed etiquette writers, at home in the upper classes, authors never personalised their examples of those who might be considered models of etiquette and instead neutrally presented rules in an undefined environment. This gave the reader the impression that etiquette was omnipresent, and explanations (unless stated otherwise) always applicable.

The important feature of these explanations is the tone of writing characteristic of etiquette literature: the authorial voice in these pages is almost entirely omniscient. The language more often than not relies on imperatives: ‘Never attempt to engross all of the conversation’, ‘Do not help yourself to a dish without knowing the nature of it’, ‘Never speak to your acquaintances from one side of the street to the other’—directives which of course resonate with the reader on a completely different level from anecdotes or illustrations.³⁸³ Clauses are also frequently initiated with ‘Do not/ It is the custom/ It is a matter/ It is considered’, issuing in declarative statements. It is the same kind of authoritative language that law manuals or science books used at the time and in using this kind of language, etiquette authors often seem to signify that they are writing about a subject matter just as serious and scientific. The above clauses could also be seen to be taking an almost catechistical form. In fact, often enough etiquette authors were implicitly equating their teachings to those of religion or even superordinating religious belief to social form. ‘We are taught manners before religion’, reminds the author of *Habits of Good Society* (1859), before going on to make the point that etiquette takes (and should take) up a more prominent place in the readers’ life than religion.³⁸⁴ Religion is not the only misappropriated concept that etiquette authors

³⁸² *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 33rd edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1846), p. 8.

³⁸³ *The Handbook of Etiquette*, p. 21, p. 32. *Cassell’s Handbook of Etiquette: Being A Complete Guide To the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin) p. 14.

³⁸⁴ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 19.

use to lend their subject matter prestige. Philosophy is a popular concept by for example titling a section on ‘The Philosophy of Shoe-Wearing’, raising the profile of etiquette.³⁸⁵

Affirming the legitimacy of etiquette in these ways was of course nothing but beneficial to further the authors’ and publishers’ needs, for convincingly presenting the validity of etiquette led to an increasing awareness and concern which in turn increased sales. The marketability and reproduction possibilities of the literature of etiquette was immense, and all the more achievable if the demand was created through proving it to be an essential feature of contemporary society that everyone should possess knowledge of. As we have seen above, this was precisely what etiquette authors aimed to achieve linguistically. ‘Reading’, in William St. Clair’s words, was a tool which ‘helped to shape mentalities’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁸⁶ In the case of etiquette, the discourse was so strongly impressed on the minds of Victorians that it soon extended beyond the realm of the manual and found its way in all kinds of printed media: novels, newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals.

Etiquette Writings: A Recipe for Social Success?

During the 1850s and 1860s, Philipp von Brunnow, a Russian diplomat was stationed as ambassador in London. His tasks included restoring good relations between England and Russia as well as the ‘standing order to neglect nothing calculated to impress the world in general, and England in particular’.³⁸⁷ In order to do so, he assumed the role of the ‘ideal courtier’, charmed

³⁸⁵ *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 33rd edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1846), p. 30.

³⁸⁶ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1.

³⁸⁷ Jehu Junior, ‘Men of the Day. – No. XV. Baron de Brunnow.’, *Vanity Fair* (London, 12 March 1870), p. 227.

London society, and, eventually, manage to flatter his way into the best circles.³⁸⁸ As a foreigner, it was vitally important to make these connections, not only to advance socially, but to advance politically through his social connections. One day in the mid-1880s, he was due to receive the newly-wedded Duchess of Edinburgh for an extended visit. There was a hiccup: just before the Duchess was due to arrive, Brunnow's wife passed away. Brunnow now faced a grand dilemma: on one hand, human decency and morality demanded that he cancel the visit and that he mourn and bury his wife, but on the other, etiquette made it impossible to cancel a visit at such short notice (irrelevant of the circumstances), and especially the visit of such a high-ranking guest. Cancelling would have been incredibly poor form and would have endangered his ploy of social advancement via connections with such people as the Duchess. Brunnow was faced with a choice between moral and emotional decency, on the one hand, and etiquette, on the other. He ultimately decided for the latter. His solution was as ludicrous as it was gruesome: Brunnow put his wife's body on ice, instructed his servants to hide it, and 'defer[red] the funeral till its solemnity would no longer interfere with the Duchess' entrance'.³⁸⁹ The Duchess came, expressed her best wishes to the wife she believed to be just a little under the weather, and enjoyed a pleasant few days in which Brunnow played the part of perfect host. The *London Daily News* printed this (supposedly real) occurrence under the title 'Iced Etiquette' in January 1887, and the article was picked up by many other London-based and national newspapers. Interestingly, Brunnow's decision was not condemned by the author of the article as one might expect from today's perspective. On the contrary, Brunnow was commended for his exemplary behaviour and for not spoiling the Duchess's visit (and his own chances of fostering stronger international relations).

Brunnow's story was very much told through the lens of etiquette. Though his (supposed) actions were extreme even by Victorian standards, the heading of the article, 'Iced Etiquette' puts the focus on Brunnow's social finesse rather than his domestic life. It again speaks for the

³⁸⁸ 'Iced Etiquette', *London Daily News* (London, 15 January 1887), p. 5.

³⁸⁹ 'Iced Etiquette', p. 5.

preoccupation and social investment in the discourse of etiquette that the editorial decision was to highlight the etiquette portion of the article.

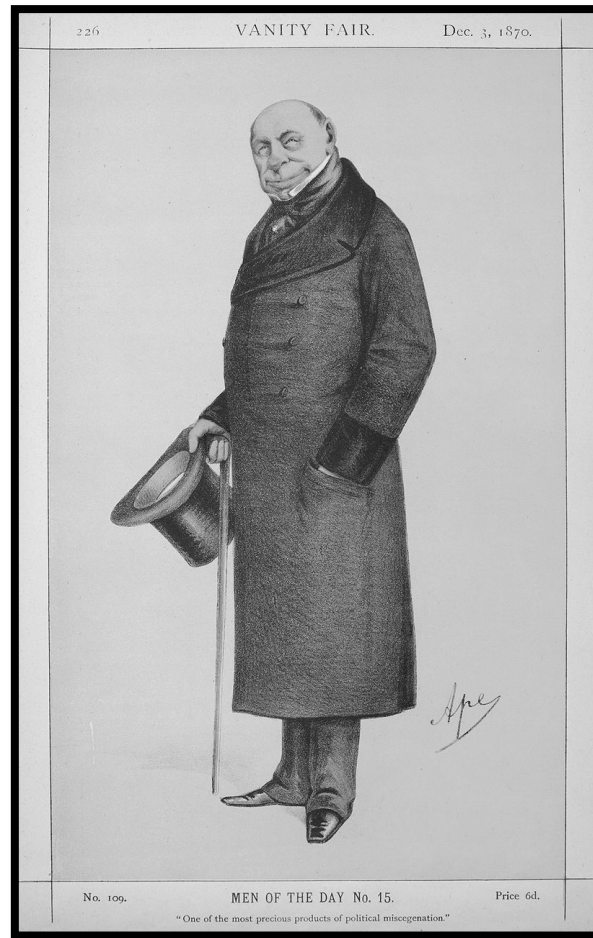


Fig. 21 'Ape' (Carlo Pellegrini), Men of the Day No. 15: 'Baron de Brunnow'
Caption: 'One of the most precious products of political miscegenation'.
Published in Vanity Fair 3rd of December 1870.

A question which arises from Brunnow's story that needs to be investigated further is therefore in how far following etiquette was constructed and stylised as a 'recipe' for social success. Success in this case is defined solely reliant on upward social mobility and general social advancement. Brunnow's case walks the line between realism and satire.

Generally speaking, upward social mobility (and its obverse, the dramatic loss of social station) was one of the core preoccupations of Victorian fiction and non-fiction alike. Looking

more closely at this corpus, etiquette and notions of it appear frequently and are often part of a character's or person's plot of social advancement. Take, for example the cynical story of Rebecca 'Becky' Sharp, the main protagonist of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), who overcomes many hurdles to gain access to the best circles, only to lose everything and find herself shunned by polite society. After finishing her education at a prestigious school, penniless Becky is employed as a governess for the Crawleys, an aristocratic family. She soon charms key members of the family with her wit and good manners, slowly gaining access to the family's wealthiest members. In a dinner scene shortly after Miss Crawley, the rich aunt, arrives, specific table arrangements are discussed and Miss Crawley insists on having Rebecca at the table, even if it means having to exclude Lady Crawley, the lady of the house:

“Not let Miss Sharp dine at table!” said she to Sir Pitt, who had arranged a dinner of ceremony, and asked all the neighbouring baronets. “My dear creature, do you suppose I can talk about the nursery with Lady Fuddleston, or discuss justices’ business with that goose, old Sir Giles Wapshot? I insist upon Miss Sharp appearing. Let Lady Crawley remain upstairs, if there is no room. But little Miss Sharp! Why, she's the only person fit to talk to in the county!”³⁹⁰

Especially in an aristocratic household such as the Crawleys', there would (in theory) have been a strict protocol for servants and governesses (who occupied a more ambiguous position as educated dependents, charged with the care of the children). In *The Duties of Servants: A Practical Guide to the Routine of Domestic Service* (1894), servants are instructed to speak as little as possible. Instructions for opening the door, for example, are restricted to: ‘a well-mannered servant enters into no particulars [... and] restricts himself to this formula, and receives the cards left, or the message, if any, the one in silence and the other with “yes, ma'am”’.³⁹¹ Although Becky, as governess, would have had greater liberty and not have been restricted as much as other servants, her behaviour was

³⁹⁰ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 126.

³⁹¹ *The Duties of Servants: A Practical Guide to the Routine of Domestic Service [Reprint of the 1894 Edition]* (East Grinstead: Copper Beech Publishing, 1992), p. 34.

still inappropriate for a servant. Yet by imitating those around her and acting appropriate for their company, Becky manages to be accepted despite her current status.

Becky has successfully achieved the feat of assimilation and gained acceptance, yet it soon becomes clear that her integration meets with shock and disgust. When it is revealed that she is secretly married to Rawdon Crawley, the son and heir of the family, it sparks universal outrage: “Rawdon married Rebecca—governess—nobod— Get out of my house, you fool, you idiot—you stupid old Briggs—how dare you? ”, exclaims Miss Crawley toward her servant.³⁹² The last saving grace for Becky is her fictional past of her mother being a Montmercy—an old French aristocratic family—which certainly helped her in terms of temporary acceptance, yet Becky is still first and foremost a servant and only granted temporary access. When it is revealed that this past is also untrue, Miss Crawley’s shock is even greater:

“Her mother was a Montmorency,” cried out the old lady, pulling at the bell with all her might. “Her mother was an opera girl, and she has been on the stage or worse herself,” said Mrs. Bute. Miss Crawley gave a final scream, and fell back in a faint.³⁹³

Even though Becky’s story is fictional, the reactions here are realistic (even as they are melodramatic): to befriend a servant or a dependant too closely was to put one’s own status at risk, as *Etiquette for Ladies* warns: ‘Never stoop to the degradation of making companions and confidants of your servants: the moment you do so, you place yourself on a level with them, and no longer command respect and obedience’.³⁹⁴

Despite the promise of etiquette manuals that etiquette was the necessary tool for social success, they nonetheless implicitly perpetuated the notion that while members of the lower classes like Becky could *assimilate*, they could never *integrate*.³⁹⁵ Etiquette manuals stressed this in reinforcing an ideal social hierarchy in which people of rank always had precedence, even over

³⁹² Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 198.

³⁹³ Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 198.

³⁹⁴ *Etiquette for Ladies or the Principles of True Politeness* (Halifax: Milner & Sowerby, 1852), p. 30.

³⁹⁵ This argument was firstly developed in my Master’s dissertation and I am revising, elaborating and adding to it here.

those who might outrank them economically or politically. Marjorie Morgan has made a similar observation, writing that ‘etiquette reinforced the social hierarchy by assuming that the supreme consideration in regulating conduct between people was rank’.³⁹⁶ William Day’s comments in *Hints on Etiquette* (1839) are exemplary of this: ‘parvenus or nouveaux riches who desire to attain a good position in society, must be careful to avoid making any advances to people of rank, and should wait until these last seek their acquaintance. A contrary line of conduct will only draw on them the imputation of forward news and vulgarity’.³⁹⁷ In this way, all social interaction was organised according to static ideas of rank, which etiquette manuals broke down into what they presented as an unalterable system. *Etiquette for Ladies* (1852) even confronts the reader with a four-page, two column list of the exact ‘Law of Precedency’, which under no circumstances could be put aside.³⁹⁸

The beginning of the Victorian period saw significant changes in terms of class structure, societal norms, and political landscape (already discussed in greater detail in the Introduction and Chapter II). These factors, as we have seen, somewhat stimulated the emergence of etiquette manuals in the mid-1830s. Yet despite ongoing socio-cultural changes in the decades following their emergence, these changes did not further affect the discourse of etiquette manuals, which remained more or less constant from the time of its consolidation in print in the 1830s and 40s. Andrew Miles has shown that the makeup of nineteenth-century society was far from static, yet what Miles does not interrogate is whether those individuals who achieved mobility in the sense of moving to a better occupation or coming into money, also achieved social mobility in the sense of having access to better circles. In a study of aristocratic structures, Beckett confirms that social acceptance was no easy feat: ‘In practice, entrance required the negotiation of a series of hurdles in a competition with rules heavily biased against newcomers’³⁹⁹.

³⁹⁶ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), p. 25.

³⁹⁷ Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society. Revised by a Lady of Rank*, 19th edition (London, 1839), p. 122.

³⁹⁸ *Etiquette for Ladies*, p. 159-162.

³⁹⁹ J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1986), p. 40.

Etiquette manuals, among other media, though superficially appearing to facilitate social mobility, also perpetuated the ethos of ‘knowing one’s place’ and continued to do so throughout the period. While John Stuart Mill’s sentiment that ‘Human beings are no longer born to their place in life’ might have been true in some contexts from an occupational perspective, it is more than questionable whether this was also true from a social perspective, and definitely not the case from the perspective of the discourse of etiquette.⁴⁰⁰

Though the author of *Manners and Tone of Good Society* (1879) admits that ‘Although the word gentry is thus elastic’, the manual is quick to add: ‘it is well understood, that birth, wealth, association and position give the *raison d’être*’.⁴⁰¹ In this vein, Andrew Miles, too, reminds us not to read too much into the aforementioned political changes: ‘Whilst in many respects inequalities of opportunity underwent a marked reduction in scale [between 1839 and 1914], the final outcome was by no means an open society’.⁴⁰² With the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign, the mechanisms of exclusivity practised within social circles enforced the boundaries the law could no longer provide.⁴⁰³ F.M.L. Thompson similarly finds that ‘the control’ of society lay in ‘the conventions of acceptable behaviour of different social groups, not that of the law itself’.⁴⁰⁴

Etiquette manuals do not only attest to this, but furthermore illuminate the constrictions one was expected to place on oneself in order to succeed socially and how difficult this could be. As etiquette was effectively a commodity owned –and supposedly lived– by the aristocracy, acquiring etiquette was seen as pretty much the most important pass key to becoming a member

⁴⁰⁰ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and the Subjection of Women*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 150.

⁴⁰¹ A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 3rd Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879), p. 64.

⁴⁰² Andrew Miles, ‘How Open Was Nineteenth-Century British Society? Social Mobility and Equal Opportunity, 1839-1914’, in *Building European Society: Occupational Change and Social Mobility in Europe, 1840 - 1940*, ed. by Andrew Miles and David Vincent (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 18–39 (p.34).

⁴⁰³ This thought is discussed at length in Chapter II: Setting the Scene for Etiquette.

⁴⁰⁴ F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Britain 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988) pp. 307-308.

of these classes. When Pip comes by a large fortune in Dickens's 1861 novel *Great Expectations*, it is immediately made clear that with this fortune, he must also acquire the correct etiquette to suit—in other words, he must become 'a young fellow of great expectations'.⁴⁰⁵ The novel perpetuates the notion that good manners can be learnt and, in a way, Pip's ascension denaturalises the idea of aristocratic birth. Even though he has spent his life up to young adulthood at the bottom of the social ladder, he is led to believe that money and an education in manners can place him on a par with members of the upper class.

Indeed, as soon as Pip starts associating with Miss Havisham, he is treated differently by his extended family and friend circle. It is however only after he has come into his fortune, that he is regarded in a superior way; Mr Pumblechook, for example, starts offering his finest meat and wine and addresses him as 'Sir' instead of Pip as before.⁴⁰⁶ Yet Pip not only goes through a transformation in the eyes of others, but he also experiences an internal one. In the course of his visits to Miss Havisham, Pip realises that he is in fact 'disgusted with [his] calling and [his] life' and wishes to become a gentleman.⁴⁰⁷ 'Within a year, all [...] was changed. Now, it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account', he laments as he is trying to make changes to his life, reading anything he can get his hands on and absorbing any knowledge anyone imparts to him.⁴⁰⁸

Pip's story is exceptional – a story of upward mobility without obvious struggle. Andrew Miles has found that in the period between 1839-1914, 'six out of ten men experienced no change in terms of their immediate social background, with those from the skilled and unskilled sectors of the working class appearing particularly immobile'.⁴⁰⁹ This is not to say that there was no hope whatsoever, 'Victorian society was far from stagnant [...] half or more of those from the semi-

⁴⁰⁵ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 125.

⁴⁰⁶ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 140.

⁴⁰⁷ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 116.

⁴⁰⁸ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 97.

⁴⁰⁹ Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 22.

skilled working class, or from either of the two non-manual classes [...] could expect to experience mobility in class terms'.⁴¹⁰ Of course, the way to obtaining said mobility was not an easy one, requiring social connections, geographical movability and at least a basic education.⁴¹¹ Norbert Elias comes to a similar conclusion in *The Civilising Process* (1939): 'it is not professional competence or even the possession of money, but polished social conduct, that is the main instrument in the competition for prestige and favour'.⁴¹²

In a study on English society from 1850 onwards, Janet Roebuck argues that 'every socially ambitious member of the middle class would rather have been an aristocrat than not, and, not having been born into the charmed circle, many sought to edge closer to it or bluff their way in'.⁴¹³ While Roebuck's statement is questionable as a description of actual nineteenth-century social outlooks, she aptly describes the aspiration that etiquette manuals perpetuated (which were, however, not indicative of reality, but rather an appeal to the aspirational imagination of the reader). Miles speaks of many 'parents' who 'entertain[ed] real hopes, and serious fears, for their sons'.⁴¹⁴ It was perhaps these parents who left their traces in the dedications of so many manuals that were given as gifts for special occasions.

Etiquette manuals certainly played on consumers' emotions; it is likely that they raised awareness and triggered anxiety at the same time. On one hand they showed that good manners were not necessarily something to be associated with high birth alone. But on the other hand, they instilled fear in readers that they were at present not behaving appropriately and must better their manners – a goal which might ultimately never be fully achieved, but which could secure eager buyers.

⁴¹⁰ Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility*, p. 22-23.

⁴¹¹ Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility*, p. 86

⁴¹² Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process Vol. 2: State Formation and Civilisation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 301.

⁴¹³ Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, Development of English Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 21.

⁴¹⁴ Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility*, p. 27.

George Eliot's *Felix Holt* (1866) provides a strong mid-century expression of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to obtaining rank through education and material acquisitions alone. In Eliot's novel, the country lawyer Matthew Jermyn, an 'educated low-bred fellow' who is at least financially on a par with a superior (upper) class, is checked in his ambitions for upward mobility and described by a character belonging to the gentry as 'one of your middle-class upstarts who want to rank with gentlemen, and they think they'll do it with kid gloves and new furniture'.⁴¹⁵ Such negative perspectives on overtly aspirational individuals of the lower social ranks are also prevalent in etiquette literature, yet perhaps not as obviously. Generally, if a rare mention of the middle classes occurs, this is always in an unfavourable context, and they are often used as a negative example, such as in *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (1871): 'There is a sad fashion, amongst people of the middle class, of receiving their guests in a drawing-room which is not always inhabited'.⁴¹⁶ The manuals also warn of entering society unprepared and speak of 'a ridiculous story told of a poor lady who took her place suddenly in good society (and by her want of knowledge and strange blunders furnished laughter to most of the dinner-tables of the season)'.⁴¹⁷ Such monitory stories are meant to inspire caution and due care in learning the rules. Such statements of course also add to the illusion of superiority that the upper class claims to have above members of the middle classes.

So even though etiquette manuals in many ways denaturalised the aristocracy in breaking down and making explicit the social codes its members operated by, they also very much confirmed, reinforced and even justified the hierarchical distinctions that were prevalent. The 'subject of etiquette' can therefore be seen as complex and cannot be read as monolithic. Yet the discourse of etiquette can be integrated in many wider discourses, especially that of social mobility. The very existence of this literature demonstrates that the idea of mobility in the Victorian Age

⁴¹⁵ George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical* (London ; New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 33.

⁴¹⁶ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 15-16.

⁴¹⁷ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public*, p. 20.

was not only tied to wealth and occupation, but also grounded in social acceptance, which is granted via education and evidence of decorum, and by extension, etiquette. Yet the narrative of etiquette furthermore demonstrates that while the tools for integrating were widely *accessible* to almost anyone, they were not meant to be *used* by everyone for that purpose.

CHAPTER IV

Etiquette for Ladies

'There are, nevertheless, many niceties in conduct, variations in habits, and delicacies of feeling so peculiarly feminine'.⁴¹⁸

—The Habits of Good Society (1859)

Etiquette for Ladies, *The Female Instructor*, *A Ladies' Pocket-Book of Etiquette*, and *The Lady's Manual of Modern Etiquette* were but few of the many titles of etiquette manuals that specifically addressed one of this literature's primary target audiences: women. While the majority of conduct literature of previous centuries had been aimed at furthering men's moral education, this changed at the start of the nineteenth century, when guides for women grew to outnumber those for men.⁴¹⁹ This expansion in the market attested not only to a thirst for female education in the domestic, but to a general interest on the part of publishers in identifying gender-specific areas for growth. A rapidly diversifying book market, advances in printing technology which reduced costs, so broadening potential audiences and allowing more experimentation by book producers, and higher literacy rates allowed publishers to tackle the still relatively untapped market of conduct literature for women with greater energy. While Cynthia White traces back the first publications of 'womanly literature' to as early as 1693, she observes that during the Victorian period, numerous 'new forms of literature cropped up', such as family journals, household periodicals, and of course etiquette manuals, all with 'a distinctive feminine bias'.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 17.

⁴¹⁹ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, *Modern European History* (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 142.

⁴²⁰ Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1971), p. 58.

There was a clear shift in the gender-bias of conduct literature as a whole. While the majority of conduct writers up to and including in the eighteenth century were male, from the nineteenth century onwards, far more female names graced the title pages of conduct literature. It is a change that cannot simply be credited to women gradually entering the literary scene and speaks rather to the development of the book market itself.

Of the eighty-four etiquette manuals used in this study, and published between 1834 and 1902, thirteen explicitly direct themselves at ‘Ladies’ in their titles. In addition, many more etiquette manuals purported to be written by a Lady X or a Mrs Y, or at least with the guiding hand of a woman. This made it clear that the works were written by Ladies and explicitly for Ladies and were delivering the specific knowledge women needed if they were to succeed in society. *The Ladies’ Science of Etiquette* (1847) for example makes this point by clearly stating in the preface that the manual ‘contain[s] nothing which is improper for a lady [...] to know’ and includes much ‘which it is almost indispensable to be acquainted with’.⁴²¹

From the 1830s onwards, when etiquette manuals as a genre first appeared on the book market, the education of women in domestic matters had become a serious concern. Etiquette literature was part of a wider discourse surrounding domesticity, in which, as John Tosh has noted, ‘the defining imagery [was] feminine’ and was ‘commonly associated with women’.⁴²² It was a discourse that spread into all kinds of media, sometimes reprinting content from the pages of etiquette manuals word for word. In etiquette writings, a clear role for women in society was being defined and perpetuated, reserving a morally conservative stance in that they presented a woman’s place as in the home amongst her family. But the approach of etiquette manuals differed in that they focused on performance and social ritual rather than morality. Domestic duties were being newly and narrowly defined as specifically feminine, leaving the husband free to fend for his family

⁴²¹ A Lady, *The Ladies’ Science of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Morrison, 1847), p. iii.

⁴²² John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 5.

economically. Nancy Armstrong has argued that in practice ‘the educational handbooks for women simply mapped out a new field of knowledge as specifically female [...] producing a culture divided into the respective domains of domestic woman and economic man’.⁴²³

While the enforcement of an idea of separate spheres was a key element of etiquette literature, this chapter does not seek to return to the pre-1990s emphasis in Victorian studies on ‘separate spheres’ as a historic category.⁴²⁴ Many historians, Amanda Vickery most notably, have made a convincing case that separate spheres were far from the reality of many women living in the nineteenth century and reminds us of the ‘unpredictable variety of private experience, in any given period, whatever the dominant ideology’.⁴²⁵

This chapter is primarily interested in the ‘dominant ideology’. The study of etiquette manuals necessarily is the study of ideology rather than reality. Though describing real structures (the home, the visit, the ball) present in society which women were very much a part of, the manuals described them in a way, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, can be best described as ‘idealistic realism’. Though these guides do not reflect nineteenth-century female identity and experience, they enable their reader to consider how women were invited, and, to an extent, expected to fashion themselves in polite society. Equally, the study of etiquette allows a glimpse at a cultural mechanism that helped to preserve and even extend a conservative interpretation of society: by painting the ideal woman as primarily domestic, non-working, leisured and emulating the aristocratic ways of life, etiquette literature sought to control social behaviour

⁴²³ *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, Essays in Literature and Society (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 97.

⁴²⁴ See for example: L. Kerber, ‘Separate Sphere, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History’, *Journal of American History*, LXXV (1988), 9–39; Elizabeth Roberts, *Women’s Work 1840–1940*, Studies in Economic and Social History (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972). Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, Routledge Library Editions: Women’s History, Volume 19 (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁴²⁵ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1993), 383–414 (p. 390).

more generally, making women crucial actors in the stabilisation of social norms at a time of considerable class mobility.

Though some of the ideas and analyses in this chapter are indebted to the work of other historians, work on the ideological manipulation of female behaviour as a literary market phenomenon has been somewhat intermittent. In 1987, Armstrong and Tennenhouse could fairly observe that ‘literary histories rarely if ever contain references to the literature of female conduct, and even more rarely are conduct books for women allowed to contribute to our notion of cultural history [...] whereas Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, Guazzo’s *Civil Conversations*, as well as advice in the form of “letters to a son” from Sir Henry Sidney to Lord Chesterfield have been regularly mined for historical insights’.⁴²⁶ Since then, the state of the field has developed considerably. Leonore Davidoff’s *The Best Circles* (1986), for example, undertook a valuable assessment of the precise that ideal conduct and etiquette literature perpetuated, separating women from the market and turning them into ‘specialised personnel [...] to maintain the fabric of Society’.⁴²⁷ While Davidoff’s work is rich in historical examples of this literature and an excellent starting point, Mary Poovey’s *Uneven Developments* (1989) goes more deeply into the social consequences of the ideological formations in question. Poovey deems it ‘more important to examine the production and effects of meaning than its origin; [...] more important to look at the structure and deployment of signifying practices than their “originality”’.⁴²⁸ She sees texts as ‘participants in cultural economy’, through the analysis of which we can gain insight into the increasingly pressurised formulation of gender ideals.⁴²⁹ In *Conduct Books and the History of the Ideal Woman* (2020), Tabitha Kenlon has more recently demonstrated the ways in which the ‘feminine

⁴²⁶ *The Ideology of Conduct*, ed. by Armstrong and Tennenhouse, p. 3.

⁴²⁷ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 16.

⁴²⁸ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 20.

⁴²⁹ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, p. 20.

ideal', far from being fixed, developed significantly in its articulation over the Victorian period.⁴³⁰ Kenlon disseminates the history of women's behaviour through conduct manuals, paying attention to the factors which prompted change. She argues that the active housewife and good mother became the ideal in the 1830s/40s rather than the 'colourless dressing-room sapling' of the previous decades: where once the 'pale, fainting, delicate young thing' had been favoured, this image was replaced by a 'healthy and energetic woman'.⁴³¹ While the foundations have therefore been laid for a serious historical understanding of the role of conduct literature in Victorian gender construction, more work remains to be done with regard to in-depth study of the material itself, its linguistic formation and how, if at all, influences such as contemporary political or social movements shaped the narrative.

This chapter seeks to shed light on the ideological construction of etiquette and will only peripherally engage with lived experience through diaries and letters. I am aiming to show how etiquette manuals operated within a social context in which feminine behaviour was being gradually redefined. The discourse of etiquette not only mapped out how women were supposed to live, behave, and participate in society, but equally mapped out certain kinds of social knowledge as 'female'. Manuals called upon women to fulfil a social 'role' which included, but also went beyond, running a household smoothly and performing the functions of a hostess. They assigned new responsibilities to women, most importantly disciplining their families (in terms of presenting respectably) and guarding the entrance to society. *The Habits of Good Society* (1859) goes as far as to state that 'the position of women has given the key to civilisation'.⁴³² In etiquette literature, women were in fact strongly relied upon to keep their homes (and by extension society as a whole) respectable. This ideal of femininity was reiterated throughout the period 1830 to 1890 without much alteration. The discourse of etiquette provides the opportunity to explore one facet of how

⁴³⁰ Tabitha Kenlon, *Conduct Books and the History of the Ideal Woman* (London New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2020).

⁴³¹ Kenlon, *Conduct Books and the History of the Ideal Woman*, p. 53.

⁴³² *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 224.

Victorians put theory into practice and, more importantly, how theory was influenced by contemporary practice, regarding their envisioned role of women.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first will outline the specific parameters of feminine social competence as portrayed by etiquette literature: I compare the ways in which etiquette manuals presented women's domestic activity (specifying rules of conduct and external standards of performance) to the much more morally driven presentation of domestic virtues in the conduct literature of the 18th and earlier 19th century (including texts by two of the most celebrated conduct writers, Hannah More and Sarah Stickney Ellis). The second part will look at these domestic activities in day-to-day terms, as imagined by etiquette literature. What did it mean to be a hostess, a mother, a homemaker, a friend in according to etiquette manuals? How were women supposed to apply the advice given in etiquette manuals? The third part will then examine the textual and linguistic features of the manuals as they explicitly addressed themselves to women. Etiquette manuals, as we saw in Chapter III, used specific rhetorical devices to ensure that their contents were taken seriously and (ideally) followed by readers. In the case of female readers, etiquette authors employed additional strategies to encourage adoption of their recommendations, for example by advertising the numerous dangers unwary women could face when venturing outside familiar social territory.

The Ideal of Femininity

The ideal of femininity that etiquette manuals portrayed – women as seamlessly competent domestic managers and graceful hostesses – did not spring up spontaneously in the 1830s. Etiquette manuals appropriated and, in their way, continued the already existing discourse of the previous century's conduct literature. This for example becomes apparent when looking at the writings of Hannah More (1745-1833), one of the most prolific and widely-read conduct-writers

of her time and a key writer for the public on domesticity.⁴³³ Like many of her fellow evangelical writers, More believed that God assigned all his subjects a particular place in the social hierarchy, and delineated individual social roles for the sexes.⁴³⁴ She conceived of female responsibilities as primarily domestic in nature and, contrary to the secular outlook adopted in later etiquette writings, grounded in religious practice. She rejected the idea of a broad or liberal education and the cultivation of accomplishments in women, considering them a distraction from their actual calling: ‘Accomplishments falsely so called’ produce ‘talents which have display as their object’, and neither ‘assist the development of the faculties’, nor prepare women’s heart and mind ‘to love home, to understand its occupants, to enliven its uniformity, to fulfil its duties, to multiply its comforts’.⁴³⁵ Additionally, charity was part of a woman’s duty: ‘Charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the poor is her profession. Men have little time or taste for details’, More wrote in 1809.⁴³⁶

Like etiquette manuals, More’s works primarily address middle- and upper-class women who could afford to devote time and money to such pursuits. It was also these women, who, as moral exemplars, were deemed –by More– responsible for the morality of the entire nation. As such, she felt they had to behave impeccably: ‘Women must regulate themselves by regulating the poor, and this self-regulation would then serve to discipline and purify the nation’.⁴³⁷ Contrary to etiquette manual writers, More’s ultimate goal was pleasing God – not society– and living as a pious example for others rather than taking one’s example from higher ranking members of society.

⁴³³ Marcella C. Hermesdorf, ‘Hannah More and Dominican Values’, *New Blackfriars*, 84.994 (2003), pp. 554–70 (p. 554). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43250773> [accessed on the 2nd of November 2021]. See also: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 167.

⁴³⁴ Emily Rena-Dozier, ‘Hannah More and the Invention of Narrative Authority’, *ELH*, Vol. 71, No. 1. Spring 2004, pp. 209–27 (p. 212).

⁴³⁵ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. In Two Volumes*. (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1799), I, pp. 73–74.

⁴³⁶ Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals* (England: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), p. 178.

⁴³⁷ Rena-Dozier, ‘Hannah More and the Invention of Narrative Authority’, p. 212.

Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis (1799-1872), the author of the classic conduct books *The Women of England* (1839), *The Wives of England* (1843), *The Mothers of England* (1843), and *The Daughters of England* (1845), echoed a More's rhetoric later in the nineteenth century and presented a more moralistic continuing alternative to etiquette manuals. As Chase and Levenson have so fittingly described, 'Sarah Stickney Ellis must stand alongside Dickens as one of the deep designers of the mid-century family imagination' and resolved to be the semi-official portraitist of an aspiring middle-class domesticity.⁴³⁸ Ellis's speedily written, widely distributed and regularly re-published conduct books were catering to a new market describing a womanly counter-society that offered the prospect of the 'disruption of all earthly ties –specifically, the earthly bonds of commerce and public life– achieved through a marriage of spirituality and domesticity'.⁴³⁹

From the outset, Ellis's motivation was explicit: to save 'the women of England' who, in her words, were 'deteriorating in their moral character', a process which Ellis believed could be stopped through social conservatism.⁴⁴⁰ She perpetuated the idea of a division of spheres and labour in her writings and, like More, saw women as the moralising agents within society: 'Society is to the daughters of a family, what business is to the son', Ellis writes in *The Daughters of England*.⁴⁴¹ It is a sentiment that echoes throughout her writings. Often Ellis speaks directly to her reader: 'You have deep responsibilities, you have urgent claims; a nation's moral wealth is in your keeping'.⁴⁴² She saw women fulfilling this important role as wives and mothers through being 'the patient listener, the faithful counsellor, the staunch supporter of each virtuous purpose, the keen discernor in points of doubtful merit, and the untiring comforter in every hour of need'.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁸ Karen Chase and Michael H. Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family*, Literature in History (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 66-67.

⁴³⁹ Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, p.82.

⁴⁴⁰ Mrs Sarah Ellis, *Women of England* (London, 1839), p. 11.

⁴⁴¹ Mrs Sarah Ellis, *Daughters of England* (London, 1845), p. 13.

⁴⁴² Ellis, *Women of England*, p. 22.

⁴⁴³ Ellis, *Women of England*, p. 191.

Comparing the ideals of femininity articulated by More's and Ellis' to those of etiquette literature, one can first see the continuation of a well-established conversation: though, in etiquette literature, the injunctions on women were not morally or religiously charged, there was a shared understanding of women as regulating agents for society. Their metier was domestic management whereby, through flawless behaviour and management, they ensured the respectability of the family unit, and, by extension, society as a whole. Even though both kinds of literature envisioned women in the role of domestic manager, their understanding of what that work entailed differed dramatically: conduct literature constantly highlighted the virtues and morality women brought to society, whereas etiquette literature was stripped of any such concerns.

The difference can be succinctly exemplified by comparing Sarah Ellis' *Women of England* (1839) with the etiquette work *Etiquette for Ladies* (1841). Though published only a few years apart, the execution of their topics differs drastically. In sections in which each author describes the same topic –receiving guests– to their readers, the tone and objectives are strikingly unlike. Before launching into the subject of receiving a visitor, Mrs Ellis apologises for ‘trifling’ when ‘writing on a subject so serious as the moral education of women’ but explains that it is necessary to ‘point out the individual instances upon which those virtues are brought to bear’.⁴⁴⁴ Ellis's mere ‘trifle’ is given an entirely different status in etiquette literature: ‘VISITS are a very important part of Etiquette; they are not merely the simple means of communication established by necessity’, writes the author of *Etiquette for Ladies*.⁴⁴⁵ Mrs Ellis in turn sees it necessary to comfort the visitor

with a perception as delicate as might be supposed to belong to a ministering angel, into the peculiar feelings and tones of character influencing those around her, applying the magical key of sympathy to all they suffer or enjoy, to all they fear or hope, until she becomes identified as it were with their very being, blends her own existence with theirs, and makes her society essential to their highest earthly enjoyment.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ Ellis, *Women of England*, p. 193.

⁴⁴⁵ *Etiquette for Ladies with Hints On the Preservation, Improvement and Display of Female Beauty* (London: Blanchard, 1841), p. 21.

⁴⁴⁶ Ellis, *Women of England*, p. 196.

In *Etiquette for Ladies* there is no such concern with the spiritual well-being, or any well-being, of the guest at all. Visits are categorised into ceremonious visits and friendly visits and, instead of detailing how to attend to the guest, the manual details how to comport oneself: ‘receive visitors with ease and elegance and in such a manner that every thing in you, and about you, shall partake of propriety and grace’.⁴⁴⁷ The following passages then detail how to arrange the interior of the house to make a certain impression on visitors and how to manage seating arrangements (especially around the fire-place) according to rank, respect and marital status. The name of the chapter the excerpts from Mrs Ellis are taken from is ‘Domestic Habits – Consideration and Kindness’, which speak to the values that a woman should obey when carrying out domestic work. Other key words in chapter titles such as ‘Integrity’, ‘Moral Courage’, ‘Right Balance of Mind’ also demonstrate the difference in the values put before women in conduct literature: the contrasting key words of *Etiquette for Ladies* were ‘Dress’, ‘Deportment’, and ‘Carriage and Demeanour’.⁴⁴⁸

Through this comparison, it becomes apparent how differently etiquette’s idea of womanhood was constructed to that of conduct literature. Etiquette’s ideal of femininity was defined by outward markers instead of internal qualities and highlighted the importance of social appearance and performance. Though in both genres, the central task attributed to women was the management of society, the tools etiquette provided were not moral but rather amounted to a strict protocol of behaviour defined according to a real or imagined fashionable standard. Ellis even alluded to etiquette literature when condemning a growing fixation on ‘aristocratic’ role models:

It is not therefore from the aristocracy of the land that the characteristics of English women should be taken[...] There never was a more short-sighted view of society, than that by which the women of our country have lately learned to look with envious eyes upon their superiors in rank, to rival their attainments, to imitate their manners, and to pine for the luxuries they enjoy; and consequently to look down with contempt upon the appliances and means of humbler happiness.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ *Etiquette for Ladies*, 1841, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁸ *Etiquette for Ladies*, 1841, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁹ Ellis, *Women of England*, pp. 14-15.

As Davidoff and Hall have demonstrated, it was felt by many conduct writers and, with particular force by Evangelical writers, that the 'reform of manners and morals must start with the upper classes'.⁴⁵⁰ Marjorie Morgan has similarly noted that 'conduct books viewed society, and particularly unreformed cosmopolitan urban society as a perilous environment where people would become spotted and impure - not as a centre for display and sociability where they would be made more refined'.⁴⁵¹ The two different models of advice literature (conduct works and etiquette manuals) reflect different understandings of 'good society': the latter continued to pursue an aspiration to integration with the most advantaged social classes in England, whereas the other modelled its ideals on virtues it associated with middle-class domesticity.

Conduct books' ideal place for women was a 'smaller scale of the domestic' where modesty reigned and women could assert themselves as moral influences.⁴⁵² They advised women to turn to experienced relatives rather than elite examples, emphasising the value of family over that of society. Etiquette writings, on the other hand, took the aristocratic lifestyle as desirable of emulation as well as presenting the ideal of femininity as aristocratic, claiming that this would ensure a household's respectability. This represents another key disparity between the two kinds of literature: while conduct literature saw manners as an extension of the moral and religious inner life of women, etiquette manuals saw manners as an external marker of respectability.⁴⁵³

Within the elitist ethos of etiquette writings, the domestic duties of women extended themselves to patrolling the borders of society by employing a complex system of exclusion and inclusion in order to make sure that society was only made up of those who could be deemed respectable. A fitting title for the role women were ascribed in the discourse of etiquette could therefore also be 'guardians of society'. Leonore Davidoff very precisely describes this process in

⁴⁵⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 168.

⁴⁵¹ Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, Studies in Modern History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 16.

⁴⁵² Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 169-170.

⁴⁵³ See also: Morgan, p. 23.

The Best Circles: women were used as ‘as semi-official leaders but also as arbiters of social acceptance or rejection’, which was a ‘way to formalise a social institution’.⁴⁵⁴ *Etiquette for Ladies* (1857), similarly to Davidoff, describes women as ‘the natural arbiters and guardians’ of society.⁴⁵⁵

In the late 1840s, the good influence of women was often seen to be achieved through passive or indirect means. *The Etiquette of Love* (1847) for example reminds the female reader that her well-ordered house could serve as exemplary to others and was also a way of taming male behaviour: ‘make your home as comfortable as possible, so that your husband is under no necessity of seeking pleasure elsewhere. If you allow disorder and confusion to dominate, he will make this an excuse for absenting himself from your society’.⁴⁵⁶ By the mid-1870s, the tone had markedly changed and *All about Etiquette* (1875) is one of the more strongly-worded examples which describe the female influence of the household as dependent on behavioural excellence: ‘always remember that she [the lady of the house] is the first and the last, the alpha and the omega in the government of her establishment; and that it is by her conduct that its whole internal policy is governed’.⁴⁵⁷

The idea of guardianship and social boundaries becomes especially visible in what we saw earlier regarding introductions and invitations: as a general rule, ‘ladies have always the precedence of gentlemen’, and a woman’s opinion was valued above that of a man.⁴⁵⁸ Newcomers would frequently have to have a recommendation by a lady and be introduced to a lady, who would assess them and their potential. This practice ranged as widely as court, where a new husband would be introduced by the highest-ranking female member of his wife, marking the approval of her family. Similarly, if a new bride moved up the social ladder, she was presented (again) at court by a female member of her husband’s family ‘to set the seal’ on her new status.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁴ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 16

⁴⁵⁵ *Etiquette for Ladies, Being a Manual of Minor Social Ethics and Customary Observances* (London: Knight and Son, 1857), p. 5.

⁴⁵⁶ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁷ *All about Etiquette*, p. 291.

⁴⁵⁸ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 7.

⁴⁵⁹ *Modern Etiquette*, pp. 8-12.

Yet it is important to remember that while the social hierarchy theoretically gave higher-ranking women immense power, the power was always limited. They were always subjugated to a man, be it their father, brother, or, ideally, their husband. According to etiquette literature, a wife should always raise (and have regard for) her husband in public and speak of him with the highest respect, as *Etiquette for Ladies* (1837) exemplifies:

In speaking to her husband, a lady may address him by his Christian name. In speaking of him to others, it is more proper to style him Mr. —. To degrade him to a mere initial, to call him Mr. A., or Mr. B. is worse than vulgar; it is heathenish!⁴⁶⁰

A woman thus had a very clear scope for her exercise of power, and that scope was limited to the ‘social sphere’ of the domestic, which was overarchingly kept in check by male authority.

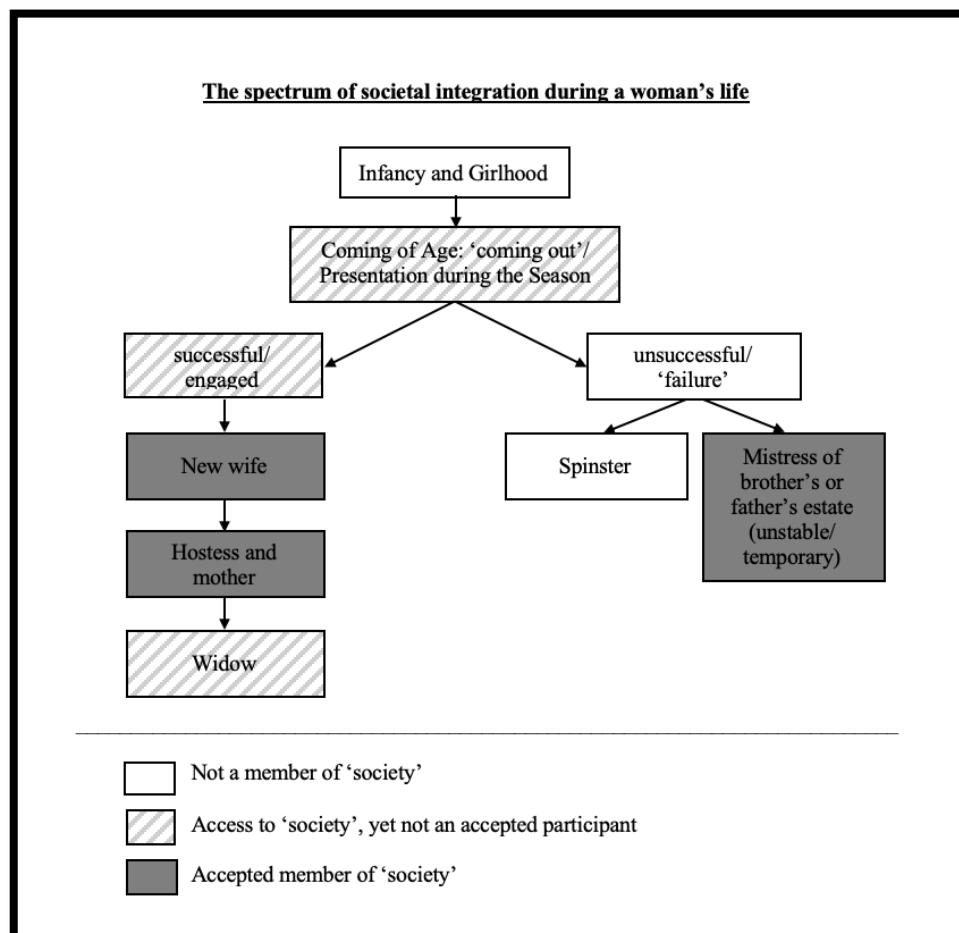


Fig. 22 Graphic ‘The Spectrum of Social Integration during a Woman’s Life’

⁴⁶⁰ *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837), p. 20.

Etiquette literature was also very clear on another point besides responsibilities: the distinction between who was and who was not a 'legitimate' (female) member of society (see Fig. 22 above). In the case of women, acceptability was not only determined by class, but more importantly by the social circumstances of a female individual. As will be seen, etiquette did not cater for those outside its accepted categories, encouraging women to follow in the set-out path by not giving an alternative.

While women in infancy and girlhood were already groomed by their mothers for what was to come, they were not yet part of society. Leonore Davidoff describes girlhood as 'an awkward time' for individuals, 'not just because of their own physical and psychological development but because they had no place socially'.⁴⁶¹ The next stage in a girl's life, her 'coming out', courtship and engagement gradually allowed her more freedom. Etiquette manuals supported the separation of socially integrated and not socially integrated women by only providing rules for those who were accepted members of society or on the brink of becoming so. Specific sections or even whole manuals were dedicated to this stage, advising the young girl to comport herself favourably to potential matches. In a section directed at young women, *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage* (1847) states that 'great caution is necessary in your conduct' and advises that there should be 'a becoming propriety, a delicate sense of modesty which ought to be studied and observed by ladies in their general conduct'.⁴⁶² Additionally 'flirtation [was] another evil' to be avoided, as a 'flirt [was] looked upon as a very suspicious character, nearly placed on a level with those who are said to have no character at all'.⁴⁶³ In this way, etiquette manuals sought to keep women's sexuality in check and reserved for marriage, which they saw as the end goal. Sally Shuttleworth fittingly calls this the 'double-bind' in which women were caught: 'deemed of social

⁴⁶¹ see: Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 51.

⁴⁶² T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1847), pp. 57-59.

⁴⁶³ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 58.

value only if they succeed on the marriage market, but considered worthless if they are seen to be trying to achieve that end'.⁴⁶⁴

Above all, the female reader was abjured to take 'a practical view' of marriage and be 'guided by reason and good sense' when choosing her future match.⁴⁶⁵ 'Rank, or station in life is an important consideration which should influence your decision of a lover'; the social standing the husband would bestow on his wife would also decide the kind of household she would be running.⁴⁶⁶ There are 'frequent inconveniences arising out of a great disparity of rank, and many domestic annoyances and mortifications are encountered', warns *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*.⁴⁶⁷ Some come close to putting social above personal concerns, though none is quite so grasping as to suggest that 'a good match' (to a wealthy, respected and ideally titled husband) warrants conveniently overlooking substantial flaws or actual compatibility.

Alternatives to courtship and eventual marriage were in the main omitted from the scope of etiquette advice. Spinsters and unmarried women were ignored almost completely, strongly implying that a woman was only of use to society if she was procreating and taking care of hearth and home. While this is generally true across the period we are considering, some later works seem to have become even more explicitly hostile to those who did not fit their ideal narrative of life progress. *All about Etiquette; or, The Manners of Polite Society: For Ladies, Gentlemen, and Families* (1875) declared those averse to marrying as a 'disruption' and 'very selfish and ungenerous'.⁴⁶⁸ The manual even considered it as 'commit[ing] a folly and a crime' for a woman not to 'seriously consider what her duties will be in this relation [...and to] have the courage, patience, and tenderness to fulfil them', the duty being marriage and caring for her family.⁴⁶⁹ The author went on to praise 'this most

⁴⁶⁴ Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 195.

⁴⁶⁵ *All about Etiquette*, p. 270-1.

⁴⁶⁶ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 59.

⁴⁶⁷ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 60.

⁴⁶⁸ *All about Etiquette; or, The Manners of Polite Society: For Ladies, Gentlemen, and Families* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1875), p. 270-1.

⁴⁶⁹ *All about Etiquette*, p. 270-1.

beautiful and holy of her duties' and even if a woman was 'forced to do so' she should bear it 'as a hard cross' until she eventually realised that being a spouse and a mother was 'what was intended should be for her, if faithful, rather a crown of honour and rejoicing'.⁴⁷⁰

This publication from the mid-1870s, could be seen as directly picking up on contemporary trends in the marriage market. The 1851 census famously estimated that forty-two percent of women between twenty and forty were unmarried and that two out of the six million British women were self-supporting.⁴⁷¹ The number of working women thereafter grew steadily: in the decade between 1861 and 1871, for example, the number of women employed as clerks and accountants rose more than tenfold, the number of women printers almost doubled, and those involved in hairdressing almost trebled in number.⁴⁷² The range of employment opportunities for middle-class women widened at the same time so that more and more 'ladies' were incentivised to become typists, trained nurses, teachers or low-ranking civil service workers.⁴⁷³ The process of women infiltrating previously male-only offices accelerated decade by decade. Where in England in 1871, a mere 2 per cent of all clerks had been female, by 1881 this had increased to over 3 per cent, and by 1891 to over 7 per cent.⁴⁷⁴ The expansion of this particular sector was no accident: white-collar employment offered respectable women an acceptable means of economic support alternative to marriage.⁴⁷⁵

From the 1850s onwards, the historical records show a clear rise in the percentage of women who never married. In 1871, 14 percent of women who had reached marriageable age were spinsters, a figure which had climbed to 16 percent by 1901 (in Scotland, the number was as high

⁴⁷⁰ *All about Etiquette*, p. 271.

⁴⁷¹ Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, p. 4.

⁴⁷² Philippa Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: B. Blackwell, 1990), pp. 130-131.

⁴⁷³ Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, Development of English Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 59.

⁴⁷⁴ Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, p. 41.

⁴⁷⁵ Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, p. 60.

as 20 percent).⁴⁷⁶ More generally, Wrigley and Schofield too note that the number of registered marriages fell sharply between 1861 and that marriageable age rose in general and especially in women.⁴⁷⁷ Francis M. L. Thompson sees a generational change under way, influenced by industrialisation, higher wages and urbanisation, which dramatically changed marriage patterns for young women. Secondary education for women was also a considerable factor, rapidly increasing between 1850 and 1880, which delayed the process of a 'coming out' and courtship, and was seen as potentially dangerous in that it could discourage young girls from the idea of marriage.⁴⁷⁸ Especially amongst the aristocracy, Thompson discerns a trend toward 'later and less frequent marriages, which can be explained by the importance of property questions in marriage and the reluctance of many to marry beneath themselves in the social scale'.⁴⁷⁹

The trend to later and fewer marriages and toward women choosing to stay single generated enormous anxiety in the press. As Thompson puts it, 'the most menacing, because the most insidious, problem of all was what they [many male early Victorians] saw as the disintegration of the family, eating away like a worm at the very foundations of all social order'.⁴⁸⁰ The much-cited essay *Why are Women Redundant* (1869) by W.R. Greg is one of the most direct examples of the stance the majority of publications were taking. Greg saw women's natural role as wives and mothers, so that unmarried women proved problematic, unnatural, and in Greg's words 'redundant'. As a renowned essayist, William Rathbone Greg (1809-1881) tackled many of the major issues of his time, including the state of Christendom, Natural Selection, the slave trade, and prostitution. The growing population of single women in the country was, he claimed, a pervasive and pressing social challenge. In his words, women 'who remain[ed] unmarried constitute the

⁴⁷⁶ Francis M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain; 1830 - 1900*, The Fontana Social History of Britain since 1700 (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 54.

⁴⁷⁷ E. A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 435-438.

⁴⁷⁸ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 66.

⁴⁷⁹ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 57.

⁴⁸⁰ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 85

problem to be solved, the evil and anomaly to be cured'.⁴⁸¹ These women, 'not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves; [...] in place of completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others, [they] are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own'.⁴⁸² The choice of words –'completing, sweetening, and embellishing'– is strikingly reminiscent of the discourse of conduct and etiquette literature.

Etiquette literature, as we have seen, was not an isolated genre, and even with its remarkable consistency across the period permeated and was permeated by wider social concerns. When female 'rebellion' against the duties and functions of childbearing and home-keeping seemed to conservative commentators to be looming, etiquette manuals responded directly. Where other outlets such as newspapers or essays simply discussed and debated this problematic, etiquette manuals sought to provide a practical solution, offering direct practical guidance and painting an encouraging picture of a woman's life as a wife, which would give her authority and social purpose.

The married woman was at the heart of the discourse of etiquette literature and, as we have seen, increasingly most advice on household matters was directed to her. Marriage was presented as the most important event in a woman's life with etiquette authors often making strong absolute statements such as 'nothing in this life is of more importance'.⁴⁸³ Etiquette writings confirmed the notion Leonore Davidoff sees present in Victorian society as a whole, that 'marriage was considered not so much an alliance between the sexes but as an important social definition; serious for a man but imperative for a girl'.⁴⁸⁴ Not only did marriage remove the underlying sexual threat single women posed, but it furthermore enabled them to take part in society as legitimate members. This also meant that as soon as a woman had 'just entered the matrimonial ranks', she will 'begin to feel the responsibilities of her situation. The duties of a wife, a mistress, a mother, all arise out

⁴⁸¹ W.R. Greg, *Why Are Women Redundant?* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1869), p. 9.

⁴⁸² Greg, *Why Are Women Redundant?*, p. 8.

⁴⁸³ *All about Etiquette*, p. 270-1.

⁴⁸⁴ Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 50.

of this new relationship⁴⁸⁵, as the author of *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage* (1847) writes.

A married couple was portrayed as the nuclear unit of Victorian society and was depicted as mutually beneficent. For a woman it was of course imperative to marry, but a man could gain access to greater respectability through marriage; this was especially true for those on the spectrum of the broad middle-classes. Catherine Hall for example notes that ‘The family was at the centre of Victorian middle-class social life and the fulcrum for the complex set of social values which comprised middle-class respectability’.⁴⁸⁶ Keith McClelland makes this dependency even more explicit with respect to those even slightly lower on the social scale when stating that the wife was aiding a man’s outward appearance: ‘To live in domesticity continued to be a compelling aspiration for men on the margins of ‘respectable’ society who were anxious to better their social status. The non-working wife, the terraced house and the front room were becoming the hallmarks of the skilled working man, with rhetoric to match from his trade union’.⁴⁸⁷

Having a wife enabled a man to partake in some social activities he might not previously have had access to. The author of *Manners and Tone of Good Society* exemplifies this when talking about the organisation and invitations for functions within the home:

“The Ball,” the “At Home,” “The Five o’Clock Tea,” &c., essentially come within the province of the mistress of the house, rather than within that of the master—so much so, that dinner invitations are issued in the united names of the host and hostess, while all other invitations are issued in the name of the *hostess only*.⁴⁸⁸

Although the main focus here is on the exclusion of the husband from certain forms of sociability in the home, the extract equally reveals an area of joined domestic operation that would not be

⁴⁸⁵ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 88.

⁴⁸⁶ Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 60.

⁴⁸⁷ Keith McClelland, ‘Masculinity and the “Representative Artisan” in Britain, 1850-1880’, in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London ; New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 74–91 (p. 78).

⁴⁸⁸ A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, Third Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879) p. 77.

happening outside marriage. Without a hostess, these sorts of functions would and could not happen, and as we will see, a wife's careful social engineering could considerably affect the economic and social success of the family. Deborah Gorham has similarly noted how 'in order to achieve or maintain a position in the middle class, a man could work hard and advance, but his *social status*, if not actually determined through the family he established, was reflected through it. The style of family life, the quality of domesticity achieved, was the final determinant of the niche he occupied in the social structure.'⁴⁸⁹

Etiquette literature certainly presses the view that being in a couple was a viable strategy for entrants of society. 'After marriage', as an article on 'Popular Etiquette' from 1864 put it, 'the disciples are now properly dressed for their entrance to society', having achieved a level of respectability that should grant access to society.'⁴⁹⁰ The 'marriage strategy' was also mirrored by the marketing of etiquette literature. While publishers in the 1840s and 1850s were mainly aiming at men and women as separate audiences, from the 1860s onwards, etiquette guidance for both genders was increasingly combined in one volume. This was a general trend so that many popular manuals were reprinted to fit a couples' format. Frederick Warne's two separate pocketbooks *Etiquette for Ladies* and *Etiquette for Gentlemen* were for example published in combined form under the title *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (1871) and later reprinted in contracted form as *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1876), right at the time when etiquette manuals started to become conscious of the threat to marriage and the family unit. Not only does this demonstrate the shrewd marketing of etiquette publishers in that they paid close attention to what would speak to readers, but it confirms the idea that newlywed or soon-to-be-wed couples presented a clearly definable market: respectable aspirant young people ready to partake in society with the help of etiquette literature.

⁴⁸⁹ Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, Routledge Library Editions: Women's History, Volume 19 (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 8. My italics.

⁴⁹⁰ 'Popular Etiquette (From the Saturday Review)', *Sheffield Independent* (Sheffield, 24 August 1864), unpaginated.

Another important incentive of marriage for women, highlighted by etiquette literature, was the independence provided by living in one's own house and home (whether as owners or as renters). Having control over a home furthered a woman's eligibility and opportunities to contribute to and participate in society, as the home was the key location for genteel sociability. This was meant to be a strong draw for women to conform to the predestined route etiquette literature envisioned. Scenes which foreshadowed the comfortableness of a future home and the degree of agency and choice allowed in the decoration and running were meant to play on the emotions of the reader and render him or her hopeful of the happiness that etiquette manuals described.

The promise of a house was often seen as quite integral to the choice of partner. The description of the future home and domestic interior was a frequently employed device in love letters.⁴⁹¹ But also with or immediately before a proposal, a tour of homes was not uncommon to show the prospects and viability of a marriage, a trope already circulating fiction before etiquette's emergence, for example employed in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817). Protagonist Catherine Morland is given an extensive tour of Mr Tilney's parsonage, where it is insinuated that the only thing missing from the house is her personal feminine stamp – the house 'waits only for a lady's taste'.⁴⁹² A 'proposal' therefore concerned not only the person making the proposal, but also regarding the property they were offering.

With such emphasis being placed on the future home, and even with their continuing imperative to marry, etiquette manuals still made sure to caution the reader against short-sightedness in matters of the choice of life partner. The author of *All about Etiquette* for example writes of many a young woman who 'will often spend more anxious thought, take more solicitous care in the choice of her house and the selection of its furniture than in studying the disposition

⁴⁹¹ Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910*, Studies in Design (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 75.

⁴⁹² Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 83. Jane Austen,

and ascertaining the habits of its master' and went on to regret the choice she had made.⁴⁹³ It is again a trope that found its way into literature of the time, with Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847) providing a cautionary tale of why *not* to choose a husband just for his property. Agnes's pupil, the daughter of a landed gentleman has only one vision for her future: 'I MUST have Ashby Park, whoever shares it with me', she tells her governess.⁴⁹⁴ The husband that accompanies the house she describes as a 'reformed rake', 'ugly' and the 'greatest scamp in Christendom'.⁴⁹⁵ Though she gains her dream house Ashbury Park, she ends up in a very unhappy marriage one that even has her envying her former governess, a shocking admittance for someone of her status. Etiquette literature similarly made readers aware of the consequences an imprudent match could have and reminded readers that property was but one of many factors to be considered, equally important as class, money, age, religion, and occupation.

By highlighting the potential pitfalls and mistakes one could make during courtship and the engagement period, etiquette manuals aimed to ensure that women could go about the process in a rational manner and could hope to be content in their final choice. In the case that a lady had chosen wrongly and realised her mistake before the marriage ceremony, etiquette manuals even provided appropriate reasons for terminating a connection:

If he is impressed with feelings of jealousy [...] if his temper be unamiable, and his character impeachable; in fact if you discover on a further acquaintance with him that he is not the man to whom you can with any degree of confidence consign your happiness, you are justified in breaking off your engagement. Indeed it would be a breach of Etiquette to continue it any longer.⁴⁹⁶

The manuals furthermore made it clear to their female reader that in any 'cases where the lady's future happiness is deeply involved [...] your conduct is unobjectionable'.⁴⁹⁷ The promise of

⁴⁹³ *All about Etiquette*, p. 267.

⁴⁹⁴ Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey* (London: Vintage Books, 2017), pp. 78-79.

⁴⁹⁵ Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, p. 79.

⁴⁹⁶ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 68.

⁴⁹⁷ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 70.

domestic happiness provided a calculated incentive for women to perform better as homemakers, hostesses, friends, and mothers.

Homemakers, Hostesses, Friends, and (occasionally) Mothers

Once a woman had settled into married life, guidance on conduct on how to conduct one's domestic life according to approved social standards could be offered in more concrete terms. Etiquette literature explained the sets of expectations placed upon women and the duties they had to fulfil to provide their husbands and families with a pleasant day-to-day-life. Women's practical duties were extensive and contributed to preparing the home as a space through which the family's respectability was displayed via perfect domesticity. Women's activities therefore increasingly revolved around the home, the household, and the family, with etiquette literature emphasising how a homemaker 'takes a higher place, and in fact the highest [...] it is to her that the most respect is shown'.⁴⁹⁸ As Davidoff and Hall have noted, this raising of status and attaching greater prestige to the moral authority women were assigned was meant to balance, and indeed outweigh, any resentment of the public sphere restrictions women were facing at the same time.⁴⁹⁹

The separation of spheres and position of the woman as homemaker is a theme of etiquette literature across the whole period between 1834 and the 1890s, and, as we will see, their defence of this intensified as time went on. In the spatially segregated framework that etiquette literature was portraying, the idealised version of femininity offered women not only a claim to superiority, but a sense of security. Leonore Davidoff points out that 'by preventing upper- and middle-class women from playing any part [...] public life whatsoever, the Victorians believed that one section of the population would be able to provide a haven of stability, of exact social classification in the

⁴⁹⁸ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 90.

⁴⁹⁹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 167-88.

threatening anonymity of the surrounding economic and political upheaval'.⁵⁰⁰ The idea was, to borrow Catherine Hall's words, to keep women as 'private persons, not public someones', to have women exercise their comforting and exemplary qualities in their immediate surrounding so that the whole of society could benefit.

Any contemporary trend that threatened the ideal that etiquette manuals envisioned was actively counteracted. Among the most prominent threats that etiquette manuals picked up on (reluctance to get married aside) was education. Starting in the late 1840s and 1850s, pioneering independent colleges in London were starting to offer substantial secondary education for young women.⁵⁰¹ The second half of the century then saw the opening of more than two hundred schools for girls, many under the umbrella of the Public Day School Company, founded by Emily Shirreff, the etiquette author discovered in Chapter III, and her sister.⁵⁰² Although the real surge in female education did not occur until the 1880s, already at the beginning of the educational movement, manuals tried to counteract efforts by painting female education as either unnecessary or undesirable.⁵⁰³ *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette* (1847) claims for example that 'men frequently look with a jealous eye on a learned woman, and are apt to denominate her a *blue*'.⁵⁰⁴ Instead, the manual advises: 'It is much better for a lady to say too little in company than too much: her conversation should always be consistent with her sex and age; and although it may sometimes be bright and witty, yet it should not always be so'.⁵⁰⁵ As educational access increased, instead of painting learning as undesirable, etiquette authors motivated women to *hide* their education, especially from the opposite sex: 'men of sense do not like a blue-stocking who is a slattern or a hoyden: but, as a great man once observed, it does not matter how blue the stocking is, so long as the robe of

⁵⁰⁰ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 16.

⁵⁰¹ Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England*, p. 131.

⁵⁰² Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England*, p. 131.

⁵⁰³ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 66.

⁵⁰⁴ A Lady, *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Morrison, 1847), p. 11.

⁵⁰⁵ A Lady, *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette*, p. 11.

feminine feeling is long enough to cover it', writes the author of *Etiquette for Ladies* in 1857.⁵⁰⁶ Much like Molly's father, the humble doctor Mr Gibson in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1866) who is 'always afraid of her becoming too much educated', etiquette authors saw women's education as something problematic which ought to be prevented or at least hidden.⁵⁰⁷

Though conscious of real-life experience, social and political changes, etiquette manuals nonetheless kept stripping women of their individuality and pushing them into the roles of homemakers, hostesses and mothers. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have noted how 'this writing produced a new kind of woman, a domestic woman, and established her as the most desirable woman to marry'.⁵⁰⁸ Etiquette authors were indeed doing just that by giving no alternatives to married life and trying to eliminate all threats to this life path. It was a way of providing stability to a societal system in flux, in which etiquette manuals held out the conduct of women as a stabilising and disciplining influence.

Similar to the way potential suitors were thought of in terms of their property, after marriage, women were very much defined by their houses and the kind of household they were running. In etiquette manuals, the presentation of the house and the female body were often merged into one: 'Perfect order, exquisite neatness and elegance, which easily dispense with being sumptuous, ought to mark the entrance of the house, the furniture, and the dress of the lady', writes the author of *Etiquette for Ladies*.⁵⁰⁹ Presentability towards outsiders and respectability were key concerns of etiquette literature, though the conduct of members of the household was not to be neglected either. A woman was equally responsible for turning a house into a home, 'thoughtful

⁵⁰⁶ *Etiquette for Ladies, Being a Manual of Minor Social Ethics and Customary Observances* (London: Knight and Son, 1857), p. 34-35.

⁵⁰⁷ Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 35.

⁵⁰⁸ *The Ideology of Conduct*, ed. by Armstrong and Tennenhouse, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁹ A Lady, *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette*, p. 17.

of the comfort of others', for which a female hand was integral: 'a home without a woman in it is no home at all', it is said in *All about Etiquette*.⁵¹⁰



Fig. 23 Illustration from *Etiquette. How to Conform to the Rules of Society: A Complete Exponent of Propriety of Manner in All the Usages of Society, Manners, and Accomplishments* (London: W. S. Johnson, 1852), p. iii. © British Library.

In theoretical terms, the whole house was expected to be managed and designed by the lady of the house. Though scholars such as John Tosh have shown that the reality was largely different, with the home 'widely held to be a man's place', etiquette manuals were insistent on the reign of femininity in the domestic.⁵¹¹ Dressing rooms, tea parlours, nurseries, and of course, the drawing room, were considered feminine spaces. The woman's influence extended itself to the décor. *The Gentleman's House: Or, How to Plan English Residences, from the Parsonage to the Palace*, a decorating guide published in 1864 insists that the drawing room should be 'entirely ladylike'.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ *All about Etiquette*, p. 356-7.

⁵¹¹ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, 1. publ. in paperback, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 1.

⁵¹² Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House: Or, How to Plan English Residences, from the Parsonage to the Palace* (London: John Murray, 1864), p. 107.

After the wedding, it was considered a wife's prerogative to change any items that she deemed unsuitable to a woman's taste.⁵¹³ This was for example the case after Frederica Rouse's née Olebar's marriage into a gentry family in 1861. Upon arrival in her new home, Frederica struggled with the decor, in particular individual items such as 'the dressing table [which] was a man's table' and 'not an elegant muslin and glazed/glass calico affair'.⁵¹⁴ Etiquette guides in this way encouraged women to make their mark on their homes and to consolidate their identity as wives through furniture and decoration as much as household organisation.

Female-decorated spaces were to set the tone for behaviour in the said space. Drawing rooms were often absent from the homes of bachelors so that they became the 'stage for "polite" marriage' as Jane Hamlett terms it in an extensive study on domestic interiors.⁵¹⁵ The drawing room demanded that men conform to feminine standards of behaviour, a restrained and refined form of behaviour that was demanded by the femininely furnished surroundings.⁵¹⁶ As a counterpart, there were also clearly defined male spaces such as gun rooms, smoking rooms and game rooms, which, according to Thompson, shielded women so that 'ladies were protected from seeing or doing anything unseemly, unfitting or upsetting'.⁵¹⁷ Thompson further explains that separate rooms for separate functions and sexes with shared ground in dining room and breakfast room were the ideal strived after by many Victorians from 1830 towards the end of the period.⁵¹⁸ This spatial separation thus in theory served to prevent contamination of behaviours inappropriate for either sex, but it also allowed men to act out patterns of behaviour that might have been considered inappropriate in the home in the past and had had to be enjoyed in other, public spaces. While behaviour was strictly regulated in all female spaces and seemingly every motion was dictated

⁵¹³ Hamlett, *Material Relations*, p. 72.

⁵¹⁴ Diary of Frederica Olebar, 17 Oct 1863, B&L OR2244/ 6 vols. 2. Quoted in: Hamlett, *Material Relations*, p. 72.

⁵¹⁵ Hamlett, *Material Relations*, p. 91.

⁵¹⁶ Hamlett, *Material Relations*, p. 91.

⁵¹⁷ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 157.

⁵¹⁸ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 157.

by etiquette authors, behavioural guidance in male spaces such as smoking or game rooms rarely comes within the provenance of etiquette guides. Mostly they are dealt with as ‘blank spots’ and in the rare instances that such spaces are mentioned at all, the only advice etiquette authors give is moderation, trusting men to need no further guidance. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this ideal of spatial separation that etiquette authors try to enforce was not reflected in reality. Jane Hamlett has explicitly made this point in her study *Material Relations* where she shows that, while the advice material she is considering suggests strictly gendered spaces, memoirs and diaries shows that homes in actuality were less rigidly organised.

The feasibility of the application of the ideology etiquette manuals were portraying seems not to have concerned etiquette authors tremendously. The way most manuals describe it, the ideal household set-up could easily prove itself to be ruinous to lower-income families. As we have seen, women’s work was discouraged, not only because it statistically made them less likely to marry, but also because it would deter them from their primary everyday task of household organisation. Instead of channelling their energy into external tasks, women were directed toward running a home as ‘the *forte* in which your skill and talent is to be displayed’.⁵¹⁹ The aristocratic model was presented as the invariable ideal and etiquette authors made sure to remind their readers that if a woman deviated from it, it could result in serious social consequences such as loss of status.

This problem was not unnoticed by other conduct writers. Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis thematised this problem in the late 1830s in *Women of England* (1839):

It is a curious anomaly in the structure of modern society, that gentlemen may employ their hours of business in any degrading occupation, and, if they have but the means of supporting a respectable establishment at home, may be gentlemen still; while, if a lady does but touch any article, no matter how delicate, in the way of trade, she loses caste, and ceases to be a lady.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 88.

⁵²⁰ Ellis, *Women of England*, pp. 344-5.

But even though Ellis highlighted the issue quite poignantly, she fails (perhaps consciously) to provide a solution. Instead, Ellis reiterates the same ethos as etiquette literature, praising women's duties as homemakers, wives, mothers without any alternative.

These images in fact remained a constant in etiquette literature over the period of over sixty years. Though in the 1870s and 1880s, etiquette manuals became attentive to societal changes, as we have seen above, manuals still were not deflected from their vision of a leisured, non-working, better-off woman who tended to the home as the ideal. *Etiquette for Ladies*, for example, sees it as a breach of etiquette itself to not be involved in home management: 'There is nothing so vulgar as the paltry fear of its being known that you interest yourself in your household affairs'.⁵²¹ *The Etiquette of Love* goes even further in stating that 'if you are above the management of domestic matters, you ought not to undertake the responsible situation of a wife'.⁵²²

A crucial facet – arguably the most crucial – of the female ideal in etiquette literature was the hostess's figure. Contrary to the labours of the homemaker who would tend to the internal running of a household and the 'domestic sphere', the hostess' duties were slightly more external reaching. Denise Riley and Eileen Yeo have in their respective works both made the case for a third sphere, the 'social sphere', situated on the borders between the public and private.⁵²³ Here, women could access society semi-publicly without compromising their duties as wives and mothers or their characters. I am arguing that while the 'hostess persona' in etiquette manuals did not quite allow women to access the public sphere men were privy to, it made them part of the 'social sphere' that Riley and Yeo have delineated.⁵²⁴ In etiquette manuals, the 'social sphere' was comprised of rigorously organised functions such as balls, dinners, or calls. Due to their exclusive

⁵²¹ *Etiquette for the Ladies. Eighty Maxims on Dress, Manners, and Accomplishments*, 4th edition (London: Charles Tilt, 1837), p. 30.

⁵²² T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 88.

⁵²³ See: Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History, Language, Discourse, Society* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1988) and Eileen Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

⁵²⁴ See: Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?'* and Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*.

and controlled nature, they did not pose any threat of exposing women to the scrutiny of a wider public, allowing them to partake in a select society for a specific period of time.

As a hostess herself, a woman's task was (aside from organisation and managing) to monitor events, ensuring that they were conducted under the guise of respectability. As we have seen above, it was customary for invitations to be 'issued in the name of the hostess only', which attached the feminine seal of respectability.⁵²⁵ Accordingly, women were expected to follow highly prescribed ways of behaviour or expose themselves to adverse judgement: 'there were hostesses and other ladies of fashion whose peculiarities provoked sundry criticisms in their own spheres of action', Lady Nevill remembers.⁵²⁶ Judgement could be incurred even for minor slips, either in the organisation of the event ('like one lady who fill[ed] her rooms with guests "as closely packed as the dwellers in the ark, and not nearly so well paired"') or for her personal carriage ('another lady, deemed of 'clever but endless loquacity, had her conversation earmarked as "like Johnson's Dictionary – full of information, but a little disconnected"').⁵²⁷ Deviation from the prescribed model was held by etiquette authors to have serious social consequences. To avoid embarrassment, the manuals provided a way for women to positively influence her family's standing by detailing step-by-step what a hostess needed to do to throw a successful dinner, party, or ball.

Politicians' wives in their function as hostesses are a good high-level test case for how etiquette was applied to aid women's social endeavours on behalf of their husbands and to help them advance socially. Especially in a political/ business context, obedience to the correct etiquette could have a direct influence on their husband's political success and perception by others.⁵²⁸ This phenomenon was described by a contemporary commentator in the 1870s who observed that 'Social Influence [was] a tremendous power in English politics. The drawing-room often settle[d]

⁵²⁵ *Routledge's Manual of Etiquette* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1875), p. 9.

⁵²⁶ Lady Dorothy Nevill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, ed. by Ralph Nevill (London: E. Arnold, 1906), p. 310.

⁵²⁷ Lady Nevill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, p. 310.

⁵²⁸ See: K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1998).

the fate of the division in the House of Commons. The smile or the salute of the peeress has already bought the votes necessary to secure her husband's triumph'.⁵²⁹ The social-engineering power of wives was not to be underestimated. As Lady Dorothy Nevill put it, an aristocratic wife was 'the only being who elects without voting, governs without law, and decides without appeal'.⁵³⁰

In an extensive study of aristocratic women and politics, Kim Reynolds affirms these notions, explaining that 'aristocratic women were expected to lend glamour and prestige to social events and to charitable endeavours'.⁵³¹ 'Contemporary politicians', adds Kathryn Gleadle in a similar vein, 'behaved as if they viewed female influence to be a significant factor in the negotiation of political decisions (and electoral customs which enfranchised men by dint of their wife's status no doubt gave added currency to such assumptions)'.⁵³² Indeed, politicians sometimes directly attributed their success to aristocratic women and well placed wives of the gentry. In 1835, for example, after being elected, the MP of Ipswich thanked the 'ladies of Ipswich, to whose exertions he in a great measure he attributed to his success' in his speech.⁵³³

Yet what did it mean to attribute such power to wives who could neither legally vote, contribute financially (without agreement of their husbands) nor campaign in a larger extent without being socially condemned? An answer can be found in etiquette manuals: through organising perfectly executed functions, through scrutinising guest lists, and through engineering beneficial engagements for her and her husband, and through maintaining an exemplary house, a wife could secure her husband's respectability and provide him with an arena for social connections that would help him advance politically. As Reynolds similarly notes, 'the hostesses' hospitality served the fundamentally political purpose of displaying the power and status of herself

⁵²⁹ Justin McCarthy, 'The Petticoat in the Politics of England', *The Lady's Own Paper* (London, 9 July 1870), p. 9.

⁵³⁰ Lady Dorothy Nevill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, p. 1.

⁵³¹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, p. 17.

⁵³² Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867*, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2009), p. 30.

⁵³³ *The Times*, 22nd of June 1835, unpaginated. Quoted in: Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 30.

and her family [...] through the food and drink that she offered, the entertainment she provided, and the splendour and magnificence of her setting'.⁵³⁴ 'The skill, effort, and time required for successful political entertaining must not be underestimated', Reynolds adds, as correct and appropriate hospitality and entertainment needed to be perfectly executed, be it a dinner party for MPs, or a 'drum for 600'.⁵³⁵

Etiquette manuals offered practical help—not least to those seeking to emulate English high society abroad. Susan Buchan Baroness Tweedsmuir, for example, remembers emulating the 'London-esque' parties that etiquette manuals described for her.⁵³⁶ As the wife of a British expat turned governor general of Canada, she was principally responsible for acting as the hostess of the royal and vice royal residence Rideau Hall in Ottawa. She depicts herself as an architect of carefully planned evenings, where every detail counted towards presenting a preferential image of her husband, just as etiquette manuals envisioned. Baroness Tweedsmuir herself, in her position as hostess, and her female guests functioned rather like a garnish to the business meeting: 'Beside these eminent people [men] there was usually a sprinkling of women famous for their beauty or wit or both, who either gave the conversation a sparkling turn, or were wise enough not to interrupt good talk, and who accordingly sat looking statuesque or flowerlike'.⁵³⁷

It is no wonder then that the author of *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (1870) presents the hostess as, to an extent, becoming politicised in her own household: 'Every mistress of a house is a minor sovereign, upon whose bounty the comfort and happiness and refinement of her little court depend'.⁵³⁸ Adherence to the ideological standards set out by the manuals perpetuated (of the woman being a homemaker and hostess) was given the concrete currency; household management was presented to serve a larger purpose and the wife's 'skill as a hostess

⁵³⁴ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, p. 157.

⁵³⁵ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, p. 164.

⁵³⁶ Susan Tweedsmuir, *The Lilac and the Rose* (London: Duckworth, 1952).

⁵³⁷ Tweedsmuir, *The Lilac and the Rose*, I, p. 45. Quoted in: Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 26.

⁵³⁸ Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. 14.

was recognised as being essential to her husband's career'.⁵³⁹ In this way, etiquette manuals gave women a way to contribute, though indirectly, to the economic prospects of the house. This might equally have been self-serving; by alluding to some grander scheme, household management was elevated beyond triviality, portraying it in another light to make it more appealing.

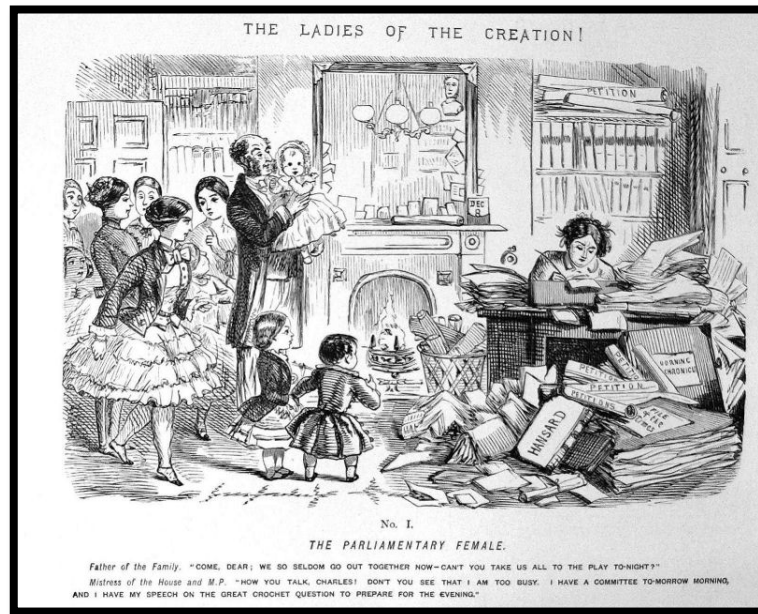


Fig. 24 'No. I – The Parliamentary Female', The Ladies of the Creation Series from Punch by John Leech, 1851. © John Leech Archive

Caption: Father of the Family: "Come dear; we so seldom go out together now—can't you take us all to the play to-night?"

Mistress of the House and M.P.: How you talk, Charles! Don't you see that I am too busy. I have a committee to-morrow morning, and I have my speech on the great crochet question to prepare for the evening."

With the family and the 'family business' thus being portrayed as the priority in a woman's life, and periodically taking up much of her time, it was no wonder that other social relationships could easily be eclipsed under the restrictions and expectations of etiquette. Though guides did not advise how to be a good friend or friend at all, they sometimes dispensed advice on the choice of companions and confidantes: 'if your friend be wise, and prudent, and sincere, she will be of

⁵³⁹ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 32.

service to you', writes one etiquette author.⁵⁴⁰ Most of the time, the advice given is cautionary, reminding women that they are defined by their associations: 'your reputation will partake of the character of her with whom you associate'.⁵⁴¹ Rivalry is seen as a constant threat, which could, for example, be injurious during the courting process: 'serious consequences have sometimes arisen from the insincerity of a confidant, and in some instances alliances on the very tapis of matrimony have been broken off through the intrigue and artifice of a deceitful companion'.⁵⁴² The pressure women underwent to perform socially and preside over successful events could equally spark rivalries. Lady Nevill for example reports of two 'friends', who were in constant competition with each other to throw the perfect party:

Lady Waldegrave and Lady Molesworth, who, although friends, were also in many ways rivals, rather sought to eclipse each other in the way of social entertainment. I do not mean by vulgar ostentation or display, but by gathering together the most pleasant and clever people possible with a view to the success of their parties and dinners⁵⁴³

Loyalty and other virtues expected in friendship were, along with all other moral concerns, of course squeezed to the margins of the discourse of etiquette. Etiquette manuals provided straightforward mechanisms of introductions and 'cutting' of friends, so that acquaintances could be avoided or terminated should they threaten to be a liability to a woman's home life and family. In the case of introductions, they should be seen as a 'social endorsement' and should only be performed should a person prove worthy of knowing.⁵⁴⁴ 'Cutting' (a process of ceasing all communication or intercourse with a person), was ideally to be avoided 'excepting [for] serious reasons', for example when the status, respectability or circumstances of a person had altered or if they committed an offense.⁵⁴⁵ Should such be the case, manuals advised to 'become distant and

⁵⁴⁰ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 72.

⁵⁴¹ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 72.

⁵⁴² T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 72.

⁵⁴³ Lady Dorothy Nevill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, p. 145.

⁵⁴⁴ *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., 1857), p. 63.

⁵⁴⁵ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 13.

reserved in your manner [...] bow coldly, accept none of the invitations; in fact, take every precaution to retire from the acquaintance'.⁵⁴⁶

Cutting, a mode of regulating the boundaries of one's social sphere, was formally endorsed by etiquette manuals. Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875) documents an instance of it, where characters act exactly according to etiquette protocol: The daughter of an impoverished landed gentleman, Georgiana Longestaffe, comes to stay with a looked-down upon nouveau riche family, the Melmottes, in London for the Season. When she gets there the girl realises that all of her former female friends have cut her, due to her new associations. Georgiana quickly realises that she has sunk to a different set in society: 'even Penelope Primero snubbed her, —whom she, Georgiana Longestaffe, had hitherto endured and snubbed'.⁵⁴⁷ Even her closest friend, Lady Monogram, who has recently married up the social ladder and now has her status to consider, will not see her in London. As an explanation, Lady Monogram writes in a letter: 'We happen to have got into different sets, but that is not my fault. Sir Damask won't let me call on the Melmottes. I can't help that. You wouldn't have me go where he tells me not'.⁵⁴⁸ Loyalty to one's husband was mainly the only positive advice etiquette gave in terms of relationships: One's husband always came first – so that even a friend might be cut if she was not to the liking of the husband or somewhat detrimental to the husband's reputation.

A subject that took up even less space on the pages of etiquette manuals than friendship was motherhood. Although motherhood was an important part of a woman's life and strongly encouraged in principle ('the education of children is a sacred and important duty to which a young wife must look forward to'), etiquette literature hardly if ever went into any specifics.⁵⁴⁹ Ceremonial visits, presents and cards were to be expected on the birth of a child, yet there were hardly any

⁵⁴⁶ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette*, p. 13.

⁵⁴⁷ Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 240

⁵⁴⁸ Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, p. 244.

⁵⁴⁹ T.E.G., *The Etiquette of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*, p. 90.

rules within the framework of etiquette which dictated how to handle or raise children concretely. The extent to which etiquette manuals commented on child-rearing extended itself to single sentences such as: ‘The formation of the child’s character depends upon its mother [...] Let your conduct always be worthy of an imitative example’.⁵⁵⁰ In keeping with the general tenor and self-limiting remit of etiquette guidance, women were seen as exemplary social figures—and what went on behind closed doors was of little or no interest to the manuals.

Etiquette manuals encouraged female performativity with a view to emulation by younger generations: ‘If you would have your children grow up beloved and respected by their elders as well as their contemporaries, teach them good manners in their childhood’, writes the author of *How to Behave* (1857).⁵⁵¹ This way, children ‘not only learned that certain social spaces belonged to certain social groups, they also learned to act in ways that maintain class and gender boundaries. Little ladies and gentlemen did not sit on steps; they stood absolutely straight; they did not whistle, scuff or slouch’.⁵⁵² Observation of habits and eventual imitation was thought to be the best way to ensure that children would carry on their parents’ ideals of behaviour. Additionally, bodily aspects of motherhood such as changing wet clothes or nursing were, as Jessica Gerard has found, discouraged precisely so that the child could better observe its mother as a well-mannered example.⁵⁵³ With etiquette literature taking its models from the fashionable set, concern for the physical care of a child generally played no role in the manuals. On the one hand, this was closely connected to the rise of the nanny as an institution in aristocratic and (upper-) middle-class homes, without whom taking care of all the physical aspects of a child’s upbringing had become inconceivable.⁵⁵⁴ But on the other hand, physical child-rearing had become distasteful for women

⁵⁵⁰ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 245.

⁵⁵¹ *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Etiquette*, 1857, p. 55.

⁵⁵² Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 112.

⁵⁵³ Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914*, Family, Sexuality, and Social Relations in Past Times (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 71-72.

⁵⁵⁴ Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p. 44.

of status: 'I must not do our household work, or carry my baby out', for example insisted the wife of an assistant surgeon in 1859, 'or I should lose caste'.⁵⁵⁵

The general rule, in etiquette manuals, was to keep children out of sight from company, away from the dinner table and never to bring them along to any event. They are lumped in with other undesirables in polite company such as dogs, as the *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette* (1847) forcefully states: 'To carry children or dogs with one on a visit of ceremony, is altogether vulgar'.⁵⁵⁶ A newspaper article explaining popular etiquette to its reader twenty years later similarly advises that 'it is altogether contrary to etiquette to take children or dogs into the room with you'.⁵⁵⁷ Despite acknowledging that this 'collocation may seem uncomplimentary to mothers, and still more so, perhaps, to the mistress of favourite dogs' the article makes it explicit that 'we are not responsible for it'.⁵⁵⁸ The article presents this particular point of etiquette as a given and absolute, and generally accepted practice. While many parents surely did not obey this rule, the layout of houses reflects that this point of etiquette was a serious concern. Thompson notes that the most common additions to homes in the Victorian age were servants' wings with nursery wings and children's quarters running a close second.⁵⁵⁹ In this way, it was ensured that domestic sociability was uncontaminated by any intermingling with servants' or children's doings.⁵⁶⁰

Such separation of domestic zones ensured that the woman could fully concentrate on her duty as hostess and could care for guests and her husband, duties that children would get in the way of by usurping too much time and attention. The fourth Earl of Desart remembered how he got in the way of his mother's commitments during the busy Season and was quickly disposed of: 'When nine, I was sent to school [...] my parents being rather disturbed as to what to do with

⁵⁵⁵ Theresa M. McBride, "'As the Twig Is Bent': The Victorian Nanny", in *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses*, ed. by Anthony S. Wohl (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 44.

⁵⁵⁶ A Lady, *The Ladies' Science of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Morrison, 1847), p. 30.

⁵⁵⁷ 'Popular Etiquette (From the Saturday Review)', *Sheffield Independent* (Sheffield, 24 August 1864).

⁵⁵⁸ 'Popular Etiquette (From the Saturday Review)'.

⁵⁵⁹ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 156.

⁵⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p. 156.

me when in London'.⁵⁶¹ Despite motherhood being praised by religious commentators and conduct writers of this period as the most noble calling a woman could follow, and her primary duty, etiquette manuals located a woman's key competence in the oversight of the household and expected her to a comparatively small amount of time to maternal duties. A woman's role as mother was secondary or tertiary in the ideology of femininity etiquette manuals strove to cultivate.

Strategies for Ladies' reading

As we have seen, etiquette literature's ambition was for women to assume an exemplary role within the family and to be an elevating and stabilising influence in society by extension. While incentives to meet these expectations were wide-ranging and entailed varying degrees of power, persuading women to put the advice into practice was no easy feat, particularly when it came to a trade-off between social obligations and maternal care. These prescriptive texts therefore pursued multiple strategies in order to get women to conform to the envisioned ideal of femininity and to follow the advice that they were reading.

One strategy is visible in the marketing of the texts. Advertisements often listed etiquette manuals among books to be gifted to women. Indeed, inscriptions in manuals document that women were given manuals for special occasions, especially at transitional stages such as eighteenth birthdays, engagement, or marriage – those moments when abiding by the etiquette protocol became possible and supposedly necessary for a woman. The gift givers, again judging from inscriptions in the manuals, were often other women. This meant that giftees were introduced to the metier of etiquette by trusted sources, at transitional points in their lives where they might have been particularly open to, even eager for, advice.

⁵⁶¹ Lady Sybil Lubbock, *Memoirs of the Earl of Desart* (London, 1956), p.27. Quoted in: Theresa M. McBride, "'As the Twig Is Bent': The Victorian Nanny", p. 45.

When (and if) the female reader actually opened the pages of an etiquette manual, she was immediately confronted with an imperative practical discourse similar to that of other educational handbooks such as grammar books or language learning. The discourse she was confronted with switched between second or third person, directive and absolute. As we have seen in Chapter II, etiquette authors purposefully mimicked the authoritarian tone of educational books and teachers as a way to claim competence and authority over their subject matter. In the case of the female reader, as Kate Flint notes, emulating the faculty of teacher or parent manuals ‘bond[ed] the reader, at least in theory, into a framework of categorical self-definition: learning, and playing out, the part of the receptive yet obedient daughter, and thus ensuring the transmission of values and practices from one generation to the next’.⁵⁶² The ‘values and practices’ of etiquette they would find on a manual’s pages then defined in great detail the ideal of femininity repeated and echoed in the various rules. In this way, etiquette aimed to ‘inculcate, if only by reiteration’ to the female reader the rules they needed to follow in order to be not only feminine, but desirable to the other sex.⁵⁶³

The most sinister strategy etiquette manuals employed to encourage women to follow the rules of etiquette was to instil fear. This was not limited to the fear of ridicule or exclusion, should one fail to abide by the norms of social interaction. Women were taught to fear all kinds of danger in public, ranging from lewd comments to rape. Even the smallest deviations from prescribed behaviour could have serious consequences: a lady for example ‘should not turn her head on one side and the other, especially in large towns, where this bad habit seems to be an invitation to the impertinent’.⁵⁶⁴ Etiquette was ‘protective in its character’, stated *Etiquette for Ladies* (1857), and ‘the gentler sex have by far the largest interest in its support and in its improvement’.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837 - 1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 71.

⁵⁶³ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader*, p. 81.

⁵⁶⁴ A Lady, *The Ladies’ Science of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Morrison, 1847), p. 31.

⁵⁶⁵ *Etiquette for Ladies, Being a Manual of Minor Social Ethics and Customary Observances* (London: Knight and Son, 1857), p. 5.

The constant assertions of danger unsurprisingly became more numerous in the 1870s and 1880s, when, as we have seen, the discourse of etiquette manuals became more aware of the ways in which women could deviate from their prescriptive vision. In 1875, the newspaper article ‘The Use of Etiquette’ for example warned that ‘the habit of centuries cannot be abandoned in a day without the greatest danger’ and that ‘the only safe plan is to adhere in all cases to the rule laid down by society’.⁵⁶⁶ The author of the article was highly conscious of the societal changes in the role of women and therefore reinforced the previous warning by explicitly stating that ‘ladies who disobey the rule of etiquette in hopes of effecting a revolution in the manners of society ought to know that they do so at their peril [...] at the present time any lady disregarding them is doing a very foolish act, and one which is exceedingly likely to compromise her’.⁵⁶⁷ The imagery and constant repetition suggested to women that harm was lurking behind every corner. In 1888, one newspaper for example advised the female reader not to drive alone with her coachman, but to also bring a footman for increased protection, as ‘the protection of the family Landau is not enough’.⁵⁶⁸ These safety measures were to be taken wherever a woman would go, and were to be applied not only within the bounds of England, but also abroad, as an article in the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* claims: ‘In Paris or Rome no young lady is allowed to walk without her maid, governess, mother or protector. Even at 35 an Italian single woman would consider herself compromised should she walk half a block alone’.⁵⁶⁹ Men, either hired or gentlemen friends, husbands etc, were incorporated into this protective scheme. Etiquette manuals frequently included advice on the protection of women directed at gentlemen, for example when it came to promenading: ‘walking with them, one should, of course, assume the relative position best adapted to protect them from inconvenience or danger, and carefully note and relieve them from the approach of either’.⁵⁷⁰ The

⁵⁶⁶ ‘The Use of Etiquette’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 August 1875, p. 5.

⁵⁶⁷ ‘The Use of Etiquette’, p. 5.

⁵⁶⁸ ‘European Etiquette’, *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* (Sheffield, 15 October 1888), p. 4.

⁵⁶⁹ ‘European Etiquette’, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁰ *All about Etiquette*, p. 3.

stringency of this sense of needing extensive protection on an outing was not entirely left uncommented on, or, in fact, satirised, as the cartoon 'Prudence' illustrates (Fig. 25 below).

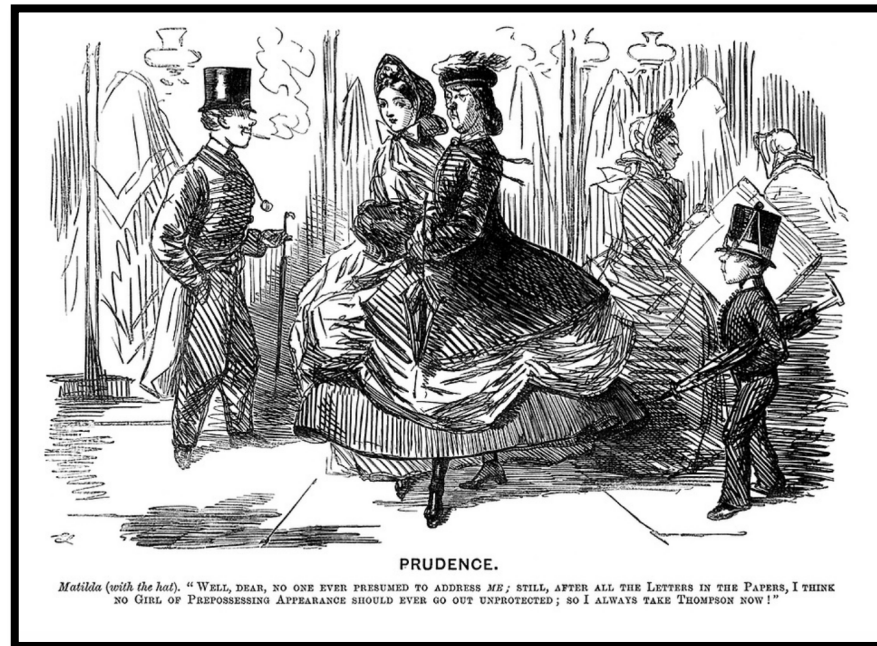


Fig. 25 Cartoon from Punch Magazine, 1862. © Punch Limited

Caption: PRUDENCE.

Matilda (with the hat). 'Well dear, no one ever presumed to address me; still, after all the letters in the papers, I think no girl of prepossessing appearance should ever go out unprotected; so I always take Thompson now.'

Etiquette was marketed as 'a system which makes social intercourse safe and agreeable'.⁵⁷¹ Only women were (supposedly) in this constant danger; 'men [were] not liable to the insidious attacks which sometimes threaten the peace of women'.⁵⁷² This ideological division of the genders not only justified the observing of etiquette, but also encouraged women to remain within the – (safe) domestic space and their (safe) prescribed roles. *All About Etiquette* (1875) reasons that 'to see the world has ever been as much the desire of woman as that of man; but so numerous have been the obstacles thrown in her way that, until of late years, she has hardly ventured to leave the

⁵⁷¹ *Etiquette for Ladies*, 1857, p. 6.

⁵⁷² *Etiquette for Ladies*, 1857, p. 6.

domestic hearth'.⁵⁷³ The fact that women in these 'late years' *had* increasingly left the domestic sphere was discouraged and to an extent simply denied.

While the rules of etiquette had mostly been reprinted without comment or questioning in newspapers up to the 1870s, this started to change towards the later end of the period. By that point the role of women was starting to be more explicitly challenged, and new ideas of equality in terms of etiquette were starting to be brought forward. The newspaper article 'The Rules of Etiquette' from 1893 does just that specifically in regard to card-leaving:

In the absence of the hostess she leaves one of her own and two of her husband's cards. The rule here does not seem fair. If the absent husband must divide his favours between the host and hostess, why should not the present wife? But this is etiquette—and no engraver has ever been found to cavil at it...⁵⁷⁴

Albeit on a small scale, this author was not only questioning why women could not consort with either sex, but also challenging the whole system of etiquette by extension. What is more, the author was giving the readers a thought-provoking prod: 'why does no one [supposedly] question the rules of etiquette?'.⁵⁷⁵

Open questioning of or resistance to the prescriptive world etiquette manuals portrayed is difficult to find; this does of course not mean that such criticism did not exist. Kathryn Gleadle argues that 'attitudes towards female emancipation in early Victorian Britain were more tolerant than has traditionally been assumed', but in the case of etiquette, rebellion or criticism was a difficult matter.⁵⁷⁶ Margaret Haig Thomas, the Viscountess Rhondda, is a good example how women found themselves in a bind when it came to the feminine ideal of etiquette manuals. In her memoir, the peeress remembers how she was put 'through a series of aimless and useless functions' during her youth.⁵⁷⁷ She soon learnt to despise the

⁵⁷³ *All about Etiquette*, p. 359.

⁵⁷⁴ 'The Rules of Etiquette', *Southern Echo*, 4 August 1893.

⁵⁷⁵ 'The Rules of Etiquette', *Southern Echo*, 4 August 1893.

⁵⁷⁶ Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Social History in Perspective (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 77.

⁵⁷⁷ Viscountess Rhondda, *This Was My World* (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 93. Quoted in: Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 18.

system which hypnotised a perfectly intelligent, though perhaps rather a naïve young woman, already anxious to investigate most accepted notions impersonally and dispassionately into acceding without question to indulgence in this odd form of occupation, which in fact she was hating so much.⁵⁷⁸

Yet despite her hatred of the protocol she had to follow to make her an ‘acceptable’ member of society, she admits further that ‘I do not remember that I consciously criticised [...this] system’.⁵⁷⁹

It was only after she had entered married life, and fulfilled the role she thought she should, that the Viscountess became active in the suffragette movement. Only then was she able to identify the issues in the way of life she thought inescapably prescribed for her. Glad about her awakening, Rhondda reflects with regret on the many other women similar to her younger self, who in their diaries might complain about their tasks and role, yet not about the system in general.⁵⁸⁰

The ideology of femininity that etiquette manuals portrayed was indeed not easy to escape. It was proliferated through newspapers, advertisements, periodicals, novels, and, of course, the manuals themselves. With this discourse being so ubiquitous, it is hardly surprising that women such as the Viscountess Rhondda could not see beyond the ideal on the pages, let alone question them. Etiquette manuals’ narrative remained very largely consistent over a period of more than sixty years. This was a literature that presented women flatteringly as integral to the maintenance of society—enjoining them to adopt roles in which they had no access to political power or direct cultural authority, only authority over the domestic sphere, which in theory, and obliquely, set a ‘tone’ for public life. Producing the ideology of etiquette can be seen as a conservative effort by a society in which women might have little economic power, and only strictly delimited social power—stabilising and guiding a rapidly evolving society.

⁵⁷⁸ Viscountess Rhondda, *My World*, p. 93.

⁵⁷⁹ Viscountess Rhondda, *My World*, p. 93.

⁵⁸⁰ Viscountess Rhondda, *My World*, p. 93.

CHAPTER V

The Spatial Dimensions of Etiquette

There is a spatial dimension to etiquette that needs to be considered. In the nineteenth century (much as today), there were natural differences in behaviour when interacting with family, friends, significant others, acquaintances, business contacts, or strangers, but also at home, on the street, in a different city or abroad. This chapter will focus on etiquette in ‘spaces’ (relative to human experience) such as the public and private sphere, and ‘places’ (definable geographical locations) such as the city and the country. Drawing from the corpus of new historiographical scholarship concerning space, it will become apparent that etiquette literature aimed to provide a framework with the help of which the reader was to navigate different environs.

Etiquette being an art of blending in through social imitation, it is not surprising that etiquette writers made adjustments not only for individual circumstances, but also for individual spaces and places. The author of *Etiquette for All* (1861) explains in his preface that etiquette ‘is variously modified, in not only different countries, but in different towns of the same country.’⁵⁸¹ Though not all manuals attended to specific geographical locations, they generally gave the reader an awareness of how to behave in his or her home, on the street, during travel and on public and private occasions. In this way, etiquette manuals ensured not only that key aspects of readers’ lives were covered but also that the volume might be consulted in most circumstances, providing instruction and regulation.

⁵⁸¹ *Etiquette for All, or Rules of Conduct for Every Circumstance in Life: With the Laws, Rules, Precepts, and Practices of Good Society* (Glasgow: George Watson, 1861), p. 13.

The approach of this chapter is grounded in French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space. In his seminal work *The Production of Space* (1991) Lefebvre argues that space is socially produced through perception, conception and lived experience.⁵⁸² Many academics have since studied Lefebvrian notions of space in connection with historical scholarship. Leif Jeram has notably defended the value of space as a historical category for analysis, arguing that it opens up the possibility of grasping a wider picture of lived experience, values, beliefs, and actions beyond what we learn from geographic situation alone.⁵⁸³ In this vein, Anthony Giddens fittingly classifies space as a 'void' in which our daily life occurs, filling in its blank canvas with our experiences, routines, performances and perceptions.⁵⁸⁴ I also draw on the argument by Aleida Assmann, that space is not confined to geographical or physical considerations, but belongs to the anthropological dimension, with its starting point being the human body and its senses of perception.⁵⁸⁵

Many of the spaces discussed in this chapter are definable only through human experience – 'public' and 'private', or 'home' and 'abroad' exist as classificatory projections or interpretations of experience and custom. Etiquette offers to regulate the experienced space and provides frameworks for behaviour, and it is here that the analysis of this chapter begins. The first part of the chapter will examine the 'public' and the 'private', including 'professional' spheres (which sometimes cross the two categories in professions such as politics, law, or medicine). The following two parts take a closer look at the rural and the urban and the etiquette of travel. All of the spatial categories discussed were beginning to be newly defined in the first decades of the nineteenth

⁵⁸² See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

⁵⁸³ Leif Jeram, 'Space: A Useless Category for Historical Analysis', *History and Theory*, 52. No. 3 (2013), pp. 400–419 (p. 419) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542993> [accessed on the 6th of July 2021]

⁵⁸⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Polity Press, 1984), p. 110.

⁵⁸⁵ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, 1st English ed (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 283.

century, their parameters adapting to contemporary developments and needs. Etiquette, as its market expanded from the 1830s onwards, offered stability of spatial interpretation by laying out a pattern that could easily be followed by readers, would-be prescriptively defining the spaces they lived and moved in.

Etiquette in Public and Private

The *OED* defines ‘public’ as ‘1.a. Open to general observation, view, or knowledge; existing, performed, or carried out without concealment, so that all may see or hear’, and private as ‘1.a. Restricted to or for the use or enjoyment of one particular person or group of people; not open to the public’.⁵⁸⁶ Although it is difficult to argue that there is a clear-cut difference in any given period, in the nineteenth century, particularly for the higher classes, the distinction was even less well-defined. ‘Public was not really public and private was not really private despite the potent imagery of “separate spheres”’, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall write of the Victorian Age in *Family Fortunes* (1987).⁵⁸⁷ The separation of ‘private’ from ‘public’ was in practice often very blurred. Designating ‘at home’ as ‘private’ and ‘outside the home’ as ‘public’, for example, does not always reflect the reality: as we have seen, official functions or dinner parties were often hosted in homes, demanding formalities as elaborate and sophisticated as one would in ‘public’. Similarly, an intimate gathering at a club or a friend’s house could be as exclusive, as ‘private’, as an evening in one’s own home.

⁵⁸⁶ ‘Public, Adj. and n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2021) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/154052> [accessed 5 July 2021]; and: ‘Private, Adj.1, Adv., and n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2021) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/151601> [accessed 5 July 2021].

⁵⁸⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Rev. ed (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 33.

When talking about the public and the private sphere, engagement with the debate about separate gendered spheres seems unavoidable. Nancy Cott, for example, was one of the scholars to lend weight to this concept in the 1970s, stating that, in the Victorian period, the public domain was typically assigned to men, while women were subjugated to the private and domestic sphere.⁵⁸⁸ Numerous other scholars followed in her wake. A belated correction came in 1993, with Amanda Vickery's strongly-evidenced argument against this oversimplification both of female experiences in history and of terminology, explaining that 'separate spheres' in no way captures the variety of lived experiences.⁵⁸⁹ In considering space, it is, again, important to keep to the fore the fact that etiquette literature was *prescriptive* and not *descriptive*: its account of space, and the orderly regulation of space—just as much as its efforts to regulate (say) gender behaviour—did not reflect objective real-life constraints or even expectations, and rather gives a glimpse of how an ideology of individual spheres took hold in particular print media.

The spheres of public and private overlapped, intersected – and were anything but separate. Etiquette writers were conscious of this: there is no clear-cut definition of either space to be found across individual manuals and hardly ever do rules define absolutes. Instead, most manuals noted individual circumstances which were classified as more or less public and more or less private. *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (1871) for example is not divided into a 'private' and a 'public' section as one might expect judging from the title but makes allowance for various and sometimes complex scenarios throughout. In a chapter on 'Evening Receptions', for example, the manual gives rules for two different circumstances.⁵⁹⁰ The first is 'Dinner-parties', formal affairs where the hostess needs to pay close attention to many details such as entrances,

⁵⁸⁸ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd ed. with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 19, p. 101.

⁵⁸⁹ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1993), 383–414 (p. 389).

⁵⁹⁰ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public Including Society at Large, the Etiquette of Weddings, the Ball-Room, the Dinner-Table, the Toilet, &c. &c.*, A New and Revised Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 18.

introduction, precedence and dinner table arrangements. This topic takes up five and a half pages of space in the guide.⁵⁹¹ The second circumstance is labelled ‘Little Dinners’, a ‘quieter style of dining’, for which the hostess only has to be mindful of decorations, menu, and dinner table conversation.⁵⁹² This section, in comparison, barely takes up two pages. Both events are set in the home, yet one is fairly complex in etiquette, while the other is not. The first codifies behaviour for an event involving guests not known to one another from public life; the second also brings in visitors to the home but assumes a degree of prior familiarity. This example demonstrates the difficulty of using terminology such as ‘public’ and ‘private’ in the sense the *OED* defines them and shows that these are not absolute terms. These categories are in fact relative to human experience (spaces as much as places) and are not first and foremost tied to one specific geographical location.

Detailing both public and private functions, and many intermediary occasions of the kind just described, the main focus of most of the works of etiquette literature was the inside of the home. Though this was a feature almost all guides had in common, no general consensus existed in print culture concerning the more intimate family life. While the frontispiece of *Etiquette, Social Ethics and the Courtesies of Society* (1854) for example states that ‘the observances of Etiquette are nowhere more to be desired than in the domestic circle’, the content of the ensuing work does not detail what was expected in this ‘domestic circle’, so the reader was left to assume that all the rules applied at all times unless otherwise specified.⁵⁹³ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (1860), in comparison, was more explicit, and is one of few manuals that acknowledge children and their role to etiquette:

If you have children in at dessert, let it only be at quiet family dinner-parties, and not when much etiquette is observed; but it is well to introduce children occasionally into the

⁵⁹¹ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public*, p. 20.

⁵⁹² *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public*, p. 25.

⁵⁹³ *Etiquette, Social Ethics and the Courtesies of Society* (London: Wm. S. ORR & Co., Amen Corner, 1854), ii.

drawing-room when company is assembled, to accustom them early to the manners and restraints of polite society.⁵⁹⁴

While children were generally kept exempt from more official ‘public’ functions inside their homes, intimate, ‘private’ gatherings could be used as teachable moments and as preparation for when they would take their eventual roles in society, imitating the etiquette their parents were practising.

Professional Etiquette

A large aspect of ‘public’ etiquette (at least for men in occupations, and the middle-class) was professional etiquette. Professional etiquette can be understood as a form of etiquette that details how one should behave when acting in one’s professional capacity. Just as the wife would adopt the persona of ‘hostess’ at official/ public functions, the husband had to abide by certain laws of etiquette in his professional life.⁵⁹⁵ Etiquette was therefore not only adjusted for ‘public’ and ‘private’ circumstances and spaces, but also required attention when one was acting in an ‘public’ role (for example, as a lawyer, doctor or government official) rather than as a ‘private’ individual. To a degree, the separation of work and private life could be articulated in terms of different sets of behaviour for different environs. While professional behavioural guidance had been in existence for centuries, newly increasing separation of work from domestic life in the Victorian Age prompted more specific and extensive codes of behaviour, which formed the corpus of the literature of professional etiquette. The format of the literature as well as syntax and phrasing are in line with those of etiquette literature more generally, which is why professional etiquette can be categorised as a specific subcategory of the discourse of etiquette.

⁵⁹⁴ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 23.

⁵⁹⁵ This phenomenon is discussed at length in ‘Chapter IV: Etiquette for Ladies’.

Newly mapped out physical spaces specifically linked to work, which emerged within the first decades of the Victorian period, further aided the development of this subcategory. With the dawn of the nineteenth century, work and the space of work were beginning to be redefined. Many middle-class men, for example lawyers or traders, had often used a study in their home to do their work in during the day. Especially in London, this changed when transportation was more readily available and affordable so that concentration of professional labour in the city, and thus commuting to an office, became feasible in day-to-day life.⁵⁹⁶ H. J. Dyos' conservative estimate is that roughly 20,000 workers made the daily journey into London by 1838 solely 'on business'.⁵⁹⁷ The development of suburban areas, which had properly started at the beginning of the century, rapidly progressed over its course. Numerous new bridges were thrown across the Thames and roads were set up to serve them, to benefit commuters who could settle in the newly developed suburbia.⁵⁹⁸ Working from home became increasingly rare, which led to the home becoming more of a refuge after a day of work, rather than an all-encompassing living space.

The purpose of a suburban landscape was on one hand practical, as 'neighbourhoods without shops or services kept functions – home versus work – apart'.⁵⁹⁹ Thompson notes that 'the creation of an environment in which this division of middle-class male lives between a public world of work contacts and a private world of family life' was in fact 'what the rise of suburbia was all about'.⁶⁰⁰ On the other hand, however, suburban living spaces distanced the lower (middle) classes, who for the most part could not afford to rent or buy in London, from their social superiors. David Thorns describes the suburbs as 'the centre of the middlebrow, conformist, respectable

⁵⁹⁶ Judith Flanders writes of this at length in *The Victorian House*, see her Introduction on 'House and Home' in: Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), pp. xix-lii.

⁵⁹⁷ H.J. Dyos, 'The Growth of a Pre-Victorian Suburb: South London, 1580-1836', *The Town Planning Review*, 25.1 (1954), 59–78 (p. 71).

⁵⁹⁸ Dyos, 'The Growth of a Pre-Victorian Suburb', p. 68.

⁵⁹⁹ Flanders, *The Victorian House*, p. xlvii.

⁶⁰⁰ Francis Michael Longstreth Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, *Themes in Urban History*, 3 (Leicester: University Press, 1982), p. 9.

uninspiring members of society who are quite content to potter around in their own rather limited world'.⁶⁰¹

One of those 'uninspiring members of society' of suburbia that Thorns characterises is the infamous Charles Pooter, (anti-)hero of George and Weedon Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody* (1892). Originally published in episodic form in *Punch* in the late 1880s, the short novel chronicles the day to day lives of the Pooter family, who rent a small house in Holloway, one of the many suburbs of London. As a clerk in the City, Pooter's life happens in two places: home and work, and these categories are mostly strictly kept apart. 'After my work in the City, I like to be at home. What's the good of a home, if you are never in it? "Home, Sweet Home," that's my motto', he declares in his diary.⁶⁰² Though Pooter and his diary are of course fictional and highly satirical, the pattern of Pooters life was recognisable by his readers. Kate Flint argues that the novel reached such great popularity precisely because it captured the 'epitome of English suburban life', and many readers recognised traits of Charles Pooter themselves or their neighbours – so much so that his name became an adjective, for example to describe a 'Pooterish suburb'.⁶⁰³ The suburb the Pooters live in, Holloway, is located north-east of London, and was, in the 1890s and before, inhabited by those of little wealth, mostly clerks like Pooter working in the City, for which Holloway was a quick and easy commute.⁶⁰⁴ Services and facilities were few and far apart, local amusements practically non-existent, so that those living centrally would probably never see reason to visit.

Mixing between lower-middle-class residents of suburbia and those of higher social status would therefore be quite rare, most likely to occur either in a public setting or in a work environment. For some, etiquette was therefore not only a tool by which to establish oneself as a

⁶⁰¹ David C. Thorns, *Suburbia* (Frogmore: Paladin, 1973), p. 149. Quoted in: Kate Flint, 'Introduction', in *The Diary of a Nobody*, by George Grossmith and Weedon Grossmith, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. vii.

⁶⁰² George Grossmith and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3.

⁶⁰³ Kate Flint, 'Introduction', in *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. vii.

⁶⁰⁴ For relevant social history on clerks see for example: Gregory Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976)

respectable *person*, but also to establish oneself as a respectable *professional* poised for social advancement. This again was one of the key principles of etiquette: advancement was feasible as long as one obeyed the rules. The Grossmiths' Pooter, too, recognises this. He constantly attempts to socialise with those of 'the better sort' and is very aware of the etiquette surrounding this socialising, so much so that he becomes an annoyance to his wife, for example when fussing extensively over the etiquette of calling: "The matter was settled by Carrie saying she could not find any visiting cards, and we must get some more printed, and when they were finished would be quite time enough to discuss the etiquette of calling".⁶⁰⁵ Kate Flint sees this domestic rebuff as integral to the humour of the novel: the 'play on broader-based class fears, such as his concern with etiquette and what is "correct" at the level of manners' are what makes Pooter a highly comical, though also sympathetic, figure, striving for respectability.⁶⁰⁶



Fig. 26 "The Laurels," Brickfield Terrace, Holloway—a nice six-roomed residence, not counting basement, with a front breakfast-parlour', home of the Pooter family. In: *The Diary of a Nobody* by George and Weedon Grossmith (London, J.W. Arrowsmith 1892).

⁶⁰⁵ Grossmith and Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. 55.

⁶⁰⁶ Kate Flint, 'Introduction', in *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. xviii.

Pooter is very conscientious when it comes to his work. Always careful to obey the professional etiquette of his workplace, he sees himself as the perfect employee and is indignant when others disregard etiquette, for example when it comes to punctuality: 'It is disgraceful how late some of the young clerks are at arriving. I told three of them that if Mr. Perkupp, the principal, heard of it, they might be discharged'.⁶⁰⁷ In Pooter's case, his efforts pay off. At the end of the novel, his superior Mr Perkupp gifts him the deed to his house as an acknowledgement of his work: 'My faithful servant, I will not dwell on the important service you have done our firm. You can never be sufficiently thanked'.⁶⁰⁸

There is also non-fictional evidence of etiquette reading in order to navigate the 'public'- 'private' dynamic. The owner of a copy of *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (1871), now held in the British library, left his name and address 'Bolton C. Jones resident at 16 Victoria Road, Upper Norwood' and dated his purchase 'Aug 15, 1879'.⁶⁰⁹ Though I have been unable to trace biographical details of Bolton C. Jones, the name Bolton C. Jones appears in a newspaper article from 1894 which lists the names of old and new barristers.⁶¹⁰ Judging from his area of residence it seems likely that Mr Jones was a barrister in the city who lived in suburban London.

Upper Norwood where Mr Jones was residing is located in South London in the borough of Bromley. In 1854, the Crystal Palace was rebuilt there, giving the area the eponymous name 'Crystal Palace' and helping to boost the value of property there. In 1868, Crystal Palace Station was opened, connecting the Borough to Victoria via the 'Loop Line', making the commute into central London quick and easy. Victoria Road, where Jones lived, shows the quick development of the area:

⁶⁰⁷ Grossmith and Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. X.

⁶⁰⁸ Grossmith and Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. 135.

⁶⁰⁹ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public Including Society at Large, the Etiquette of Weddings, the Ball-Room, the Dinner-Table, the Toilet, &c. &c.*, A New and Revised Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), previously discussed above.

⁶¹⁰ 'New Barristers' in: *Evening Telegraph*, Thursday 7th June 1894, p. 4.

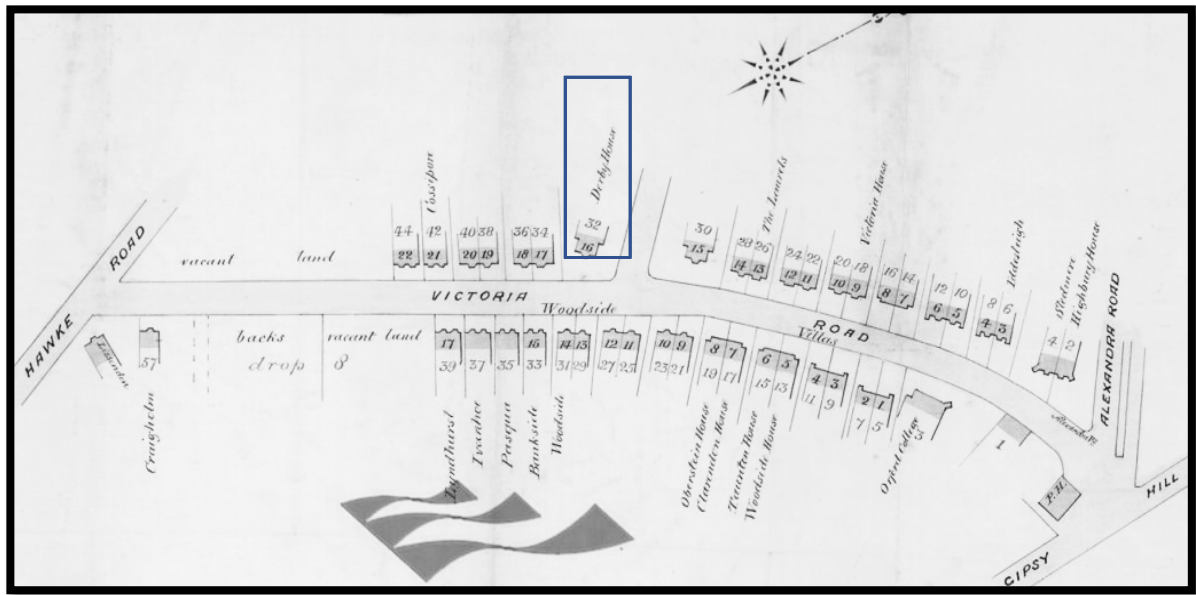


Fig. 27 'Street Renumbering Files', 1889, drawing, LBL/DCEPS/SL/1/108 ©Lambeth Archives <https://boroughphotos.org/lambeth/victoria-road-upper-norwood/> [accessed on the 23rd June 2021]

The street map above is a renumbering plan for the area from 1889, which included many newly built houses in the numbering system of the road. The former number 16 where Bolton C. Jones resided was a large, free standing corner property, now given the name of 'Derby House'. If Jones is indeed the lawyer of that name, he was (as is to be expected) the owner of a property larger than those of his neighbours who were clerks or tradesmen. This was indeed a 'Pooterish suburb'; if anything, slightly more affluent, at a manageable distance from the city but with no shops, amusements, or attractions (save the a few miles distant Crystal Palace).

Of all the etiquette manuals available at the time when Mr Jones purchased his copy, he chose a title particularly alert to the public and private division. Granted, it may have been the only one in stock wherever Mr Jones purchased it but given the ubiquity of etiquette manuals and the high number of titles, editions and re-prints, it does not seem wholly unlikely that the choice was

deliberate.⁶¹¹ What Mr Jones's choice shows is his concern not only with matters of etiquette, but a presumptive interest in the relationship between public and private life, an impure and yet increasingly forceful distinction that, as we have seen, he was experiencing almost every day. As a commuter and suburbanite, Jones must have had an awareness of the different kinds of etiquette different environments demanded, and his purchase in all likelihood exhibits a certain desire for guidance on this matter. *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* was a sizeable, yet slim volume, which, much like many other etiquette guides, focused on appropriate behaviour in specific spaces and circumstances. What Pooter's fictional and Mr Jones's non-fictional engagement with etiquette demonstrate is lower-middle-class awareness not just of particular rules of etiquette for different spaces but, at least in Pooter's case, of what was specified by the etiquette industry in the way of situation-specific appropriate behaviour to help one get ahead (whether readers' awareness went so far that they actually followed the advice given is, of course, another matter).

Medical Etiquette

Aside from the law and general clerkship, medicine was another field where professional etiquette featured prominently. It is perhaps the field that is best documented from today's perspective, with a plethora of articles in newspapers, journals and manuals surviving. A search of the *British Newspaper Archive* alone for example returns 25,559 entries in England between 1834 and 1883 with 'medical etiquette' in the title and this includes only the daily newspapers and not the many journals and periodicals entirely devoted to medical matters. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the word 'etiquette' here does not have quite the same resonance as in the etiquette manual (it is not presented as all-encompassing but refers to the individual in the role of the medical professional), though of course, this still makes it part of the wider phenomenon of etiquette literature. The focus here lay not on the implicit codes of high society either, but rather the specifics of

⁶¹¹ Further details on the publishers, circulation and printing of etiquette manuals can be found in 'Chapter I: Creating Etiquette'.

professional conduct. It also had an important dimension of care for propriety in situations where propriety was for obvious reasons at particular risk.

This became somewhat of a preoccupation with medical journals or papers, which devoted significant space to the issues of medical etiquette. *The British Medical Journal* or *The Lancet* for example, included a column entitled ‘Medical Etiquette’, which, in each issue, published letters sent in by practitioners with questions, notes, breaches or grievances on the subject. But not only due to the rich repository of materials does medical etiquette offer itself as an interesting case study of ‘public’ and professional etiquette. A closer look at medical etiquette brings valuable insights into the expected behaviour of medical men and how certain sets of behaviour (different from those employed by private individuals in everyday life) were used to navigate the professional sphere.

Behavioural guidance for medical staff in book form was unsurprisingly not new when etiquette guides started to appear on the market in the 1830s. Thomas Percival (1740-1804), a physician working in Manchester, published a work entitled *Medical Ethics: Or, a Code of Institutes and Precepts, Adapted to the Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons* in 1792, one of the earliest treatises with a title indicative of guidance literature for doctors. Percival used very similar language to that of later etiquette writers, describing medical ethics as a ‘code of laws by which the practice of that comprehensive institution is now governed’.⁶¹² Though he did not break these laws down into situation-specific sets of behavioural rules as etiquette writers did, he acknowledged the importance of scrupulous adherence to standards of good conduct: According to Percival, medical men ‘should study, also, in their deportment, so to unite tenderness with steadiness, and condescension with authority, as to inspire the minds of their patients with gratitude, respect and Confidence’.⁶¹³

⁶¹² Thomas Percival, *Medical Ethics: Or, a Code of Institutes and Precepts, Adapted to the Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107360518>> [accessed on the 18th of June 2021], p. 1.

⁶¹³ Percival, *Medical Ethics*, p. 9.

By the start of the Victorian Age, the need to spell out medical propriety more explicitly than Percival had done became pressing. On the one hand, the trend in medical education in the 1830s was toward strict ‘systemization and rationalization’ so that medical procedures, routes to diagnostics, and patient interactions became increasingly codified.⁶¹⁴ When medical man Abraham Banks published one of the first guides explicitly with medical etiquette in the title: *Medical Etiquette, Or an Essay upon the Laws and Regulations Which Ought to Govern the Conduct of Members of the Medical Profession in Their Relation to Each Other. Compiled Exclusively for the Profession* (1839). He claimed it was a work ‘long wanted in the profession’, to which ‘members desirous of acting uprightly and honourably might refer to in all cases of doubt’.⁶¹⁵ On the other hand, competition was steadily increasing. In 1826, a register was published which listed all those qualified to practice medicine.⁶¹⁶ At the same time, all medical professionals were awarded the same legal status, ‘end[ing] the rigid hierarchical division of the profession into three estates, physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries’.⁶¹⁷

These factors aided the formulation of what would come to be known as ‘medical etiquette’, a subcategory of etiquette literature specifically written for (and supposedly by), as well as advertised at, medical professionals. Etiquette in general was marketed as a tool to navigate society, to blend in, and to assist professional advancement. Broadly the same promises and hopes were extended to medical etiquette as to general social etiquette: Abraham Banks for example writes his manual with the ‘most unfeigned desire to see the profession disentangle itself from the thralldom under which it labours, to raise it in public estimation’.⁶¹⁸ The guiding principles of this

⁶¹⁴ S. W. F Holloway, ‘Medical Education In England, 1830–1858: A Sociological Analysis’, *History*, 1964, pp. 299–324 (p. 299).

⁶¹⁵ Abraham Banks, Member of the Royal College of surgeons, London; Licentiate of the Company of Apothecaries; and Late Surgeon in the Hon. East India Company’s Service., *Medical Etiquette, Or an Essay upon the Laws and Regulations Which Ought to Govern the Conduct of Members of the Medical Profession in Their Relation to Each Other. Compiled Exclusively for the Profession* (London: Charles Fox, 1839), p. ix.

⁶¹⁶ Holloway, ‘Medical Education In England’, p. 299.

⁶¹⁷ Holloway, ‘Medical Education In England’, p. 299.

⁶¹⁸ Banks, *Medical Etiquette*, p. xv.

specialised etiquette were, as in all etiquette manuals, kept simple and pragmatic. The consensus in the literature was that medical professionals should:

- a. request 'honorariums' instead of payments (to remove the stigma of treating/prescribing for personal gain)
- b. never attempt to steal a patient from a fellow practitioner (to treat another's patient goes against the perceived honour of the profession)
- c. never use technical terms towards those who do not understand them (an insult)
- d. always maintain discretion about patient matters

General etiquette matters such as hygiene, appropriate clothing, and personal comportment were also expected. In some circumstances, however, medical professionals were excused from obedience to general etiquette, as Banks notes in *Medical Etiquette*: 'Society has been considerate enough to allow the plea of a professional engagement to take precedence of all others, and an ample reason for relinquishing any present occupation'.⁶¹⁹ Having accepted an invitation or engagement, it would, according to general etiquette, be a serious infraction of etiquette not to attend. By contrast, medical duty took precedence over social commitments and relieved the medical professional (temporarily at least) from constrictions of general etiquette, avoiding the embarrassment of failing to attend a dinner or a function in order to attend to sickness or injury.

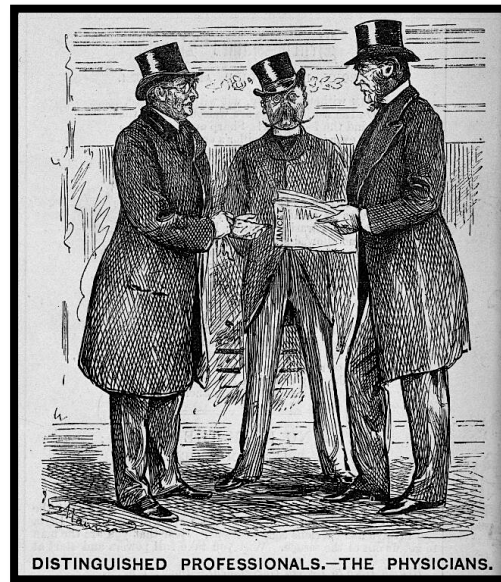


Fig. 28 'Distinguished Professionals. – The Physicians.' Wood Engraving after George Du Maurier, ca. 1870s.

⁶¹⁹ Banks, *Medical Etiquette*, p. 4.

Doctors were widely represented in the media, although often reduced to a range of specific types. Victorian fiction is rich with depictions of medical men, and their business success is often closely linked to their professional etiquette. In Charles Dickens's fourteen major works alone twenty-seven medical men appear.⁶²⁰ In *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) especially, it is shown that command of professional etiquette makes a difference in social perception and professional achievement. Robert 'Bob' Sawyer, one of the principal characters, is struggling to make a livelihood as a doctor. His initial appearance and personal bearing suggest little understanding of professional expectations:

Mr. Bob Sawyer, who was habited in a coarse blue coat, which, without being either a great-coat or a surtout, partook of the nature and qualities of both, had about him that sort of slovenly smartness, and swaggering gait, which is peculiar to young gentlemen who smoke in the streets by day, shout and scream in the same by night, call waiters by their Christian names, and do various other acts and deeds of an equally facetious description. He wore a pair of plaid trousers, and a large rough double-breasted waistcoat; out of doors, he carried a thick stick with a big top. He eschewed gloves, and looked, upon the whole, something like a dissipated Robinson Crusoe.⁶²¹

Sawyer (his name plays on 'sawbones', the old comic typology of a brute surgeon) constantly tries to come up with new strategies to appear impressively overwhelmed with patients, such as purposely sending medicines out to the wrong addresses or pretending to be very busy when in fact he is grappling for patients. In doing so, he is violating another principle of professional etiquette, which Banks describes as the 'giving a false impression of extensive business,' which 'cannot be too strongly reprobated; it is not simply a violation of professional etiquette, but a monstrous outrage upon the common civilities of life'.⁶²²

Sawyer's character is frequently contrasted with those of other, more respectable doctors, like the physician who attends Mrs Trundle, a newly married middle-class woman when she is unwell. The unnamed physician is described satirically as 'a wise and discreet doctor, and knew

⁶²⁰ J. E. Cosnett, 'Dickens And Doctors: Vignettes Of Victorian Medicine', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, December 1992, pp. 1540–42 (p. 1540)

⁶²¹ Charles Dickens and James Kinsley, *The Pickwick Papers*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 365.

⁶²² Banks, *Medical Etiquette*, p. 5.

what was good for himself as well as for other people'.⁶²³ Interestingly, this other doctor is neither given a name nor explicitly described—he is identified as a doctor, not as an individual. One of the conclusions of Tabitha Sparks' extensive study on Victorian doctors is precisely that: 'named by his accreditation alone, his vocation consumes his personal identity; it is hard to imagine him also as a husband, a father, or a son'.⁶²⁴ With some exceptions, what literature (especially comedic literature) and etiquette manuals repeatedly suggest is a portrait of a successful, respectable doctor as someone who has negated his 'private' self in favour of a 'public', professional self.

A distinction between private individual and professional character in the real world is also reflected in newspaper coverings of the medical profession. Take, for example, two poignant real events (both widely reported), one from *The Times* in the 1860s, when etiquette was booming in the press and book market, and one from *The Sunderland Echo* in the 1880s. The similarities between them show that, as with etiquette literature (which did not significantly evolve or change over time), the articulation of medical etiquette also remained strikingly consistent. The two examples chosen demonstrate not only that the professional obligation trumped what a private individual might do in particular circumstances, but also show how binding this code of professional etiquette was for physicians (and that some were taking it seriously to the extreme).

The first example, a case of medical etiquette being interpreted *ad absurdum* occurred in the 1860s in the context of widespread media interest in the trial of Edward William Pritchard (1825–1865). An English doctor from Hampshire, who had been educated in London, but moved to Glasgow in later life, Dr Pritchard was accused and later convicted of killing his wife, Mary Jane Pritchard, and mother-in-law, Jane Taylor, by poisoning them with antimony, a sulphide mineral which was used in some medicines, but which was toxic in larger quantities. Over the course of several weeks in early 1865, Pritchard's mother-in-law Jane first succumbed to the effects of the

⁶²³ Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, p. 715.

⁶²⁴ Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), p. 8.

poison and was shortly followed by her daughter Mary. The trial received extensive newspaper coverage and also seeped into wider popular print culture, even gaining a mention in the Sherlock Holmes short story ‘The Adventures of the Speckled Band’ (1892).⁶²⁵ Dr Pritchard was also assumed to have committed one previous murder (of a maid) but was never tried for it. Being a respected professional, he had (until the deaths of his wife and her mother) escaped suspicion.



Fig. 29 Edward William Pritchard, the picture of respectable professionalism, shortly before his conviction in 1865. Photographer: Cramb Brothers (James and John). 67 West Nile Street, Glasgow.

When Dr Pritchard’s gruesome crime came under public scrutiny, so also did the involvement of another doctor, a Dr Paterson. James Paterson (1808-1881) was a Scot who had spent his life practising medicine in Glasgow. Though both victims were treated by Dr Pritchard as their regular physician, Dr Paterson (and two others) were consulted for second opinions when

⁶²⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle describes Pritchard as being ‘head of his profession’, with his profession being murder. In: Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: Selected Stories*, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 221.

the women began to exhibit signs of severe illness. The other two consultants failed to locate the cause of illness, but Dr Paterson recognised the signs of antimonial poisoning. As a medical man, however, it would have gone against the code of etiquette to disagree, or even worse, question or condemn the method of treatment by the regular physician of the patient. Banks' handbook on medical etiquette is also quite clear on this:

A physician called in to give a second opinion does not like to change the method of treatment too abruptly... Smiles and compliments are exchanged during the consultation at the bedside ... a patient must often be protected from his own fears, the truth must always be told him, but not the whole truth, and the question whether he should be made aware of his real danger is one that must forever remain open.⁶²⁶

Dr Paterson, then, in 'possession of this terrible secret for three weeks', which he kept to himself, 'prescribed certain things, and then felt his duty was done', according to the *Times*' rendition of Paterson's involvement in the case.⁶²⁷ The *Times* author, summarising Paterson's own testimony at the trial, states further that

"The etiquette of the profession" restrained him from enquiring further, [...] and so the poor woman was poisoned by slow degrees, we may say, in the presence of a witness. That witness, however, was no accomplice to the murder, but tongue tied under the duress, not of bodily terror, but of professional etiquette.⁶²⁸

While there was little question of Dr Pritchard's guilt, Dr Paterson's guilt was a controversial topic in the press. Shortly after the trial had concluded and Dr Pritchard had been hanged, a pamphlet with the title *The Pritchard Poisoning Case: A Vindication of Dr James Paterson* (1865) appeared. As 'member of an honourable and high-minded profession', the author states that Dr Paterson was deserving of a vindication.⁶²⁹ In the author's opinion, Dr Paterson had had no other course of action than the one he had pursued. 'Was he to bring this heavy accusation against another medical man?' the author asks, 'he would undoubtedly have been ruined in purse and reputation forever'.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁶ Banks, *Medical Etiquette*, p. 5.

⁶²⁷ 'Medical Etiquette', *The Times* (London, 14 July 1865), unpaginated.

⁶²⁸ 'Medical Etiquette', unpaginated.

⁶²⁹ J.M.V., *The Pritchard Poisoning Case: A Vindication of Dr James Paterson* (Glasgow: James Nimmo, 1865), p. 3.

⁶³⁰ *A Vindication of Dr James Paterson*, p. 7.

The *Times* was less favourable to Dr Paterson and called the matter an ‘extraordinary piece of moral obliquity’, as Paterson put professional etiquette above a patient’s life.⁶³¹ The article explains this choice as follows: ‘medical etiquette fosters a kind of honour which is a safeguard against baseness. Still, it is often carried much too far, and operates in the same way as official routine, in crushing individual conscientiousness’.⁶³² The author concludes that the kind of behaviour Dr Paterson exhibited is not a singular occurrence: ‘this conduct, though it transgressed the furthest line of veniality yet traced by medical cases, is not so wholly unlike what is done every day by respectable medical men as we could desire’.⁶³³

The second example does in fact demonstrate a similar stubbornness to follow medical etiquette at all times, though the consequences were not quite as severe. In September 1883, a newspaper article entitled ‘A Case of Local Etiquette’ appeared in *The Sunderland Echo*. The incident, according to the author, demonstrated the very ‘tyranny of medical etiquette’.⁶³⁴ A ‘well-known local gentleman’ was afflicted by a serious nosebleed, and so sent for a doctor. The doctor, however, refused to treat him, as another doctor was his regular physician and it ‘would be a breach of professional etiquette for any other doctor to act in the case’.⁶³⁵ When sending for the other doctor, that doctor also refused to treat him, as this case of illness was now in the hands of the first doctor he consulted. Hours later, the patient, with a still steadily bleeding nose, was forced to walk to a nearby infirmary so that he could finally receive treatment. The journalist comments that ‘it is unnecessary to enumerate the many other instances in which local doctors have “stood on fine points” while unfortunate beings who pressingly needed their assistance have been dying’, and blames professional etiquette for the doctors’ failings, acknowledging the powerful role unduly

⁶³¹ ‘Medical Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶³² ‘Medical Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶³³ ‘Medical Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶³⁴ ‘A Case of Local Etiquette’, *The Sunderland Echo*, 15 September 1883, unpaginated.

⁶³⁵ ‘A Case of Local Etiquette’, unpaginated.

restrictive social codes were playing in this profession: ‘Doctors are but human at the best, and in many instances, they are deplorably feeble when in the thralls of etiquette’.⁶³⁶

Etiquette and Location: Rural and Urban

In general, etiquette was a publishing phenomenon of the city, or more precisely, of London. Etiquette manuals were mostly published and distributed from there – of the many etiquette books used in this study, the vast majority, 73 out of 81, a whopping 90 percent, were published in London. It is in fact rather rare to find a British manual not published in the capital. Glasgow, New York and Philadelphia, also flourishing cities at the time, were other considerable hubs for etiquette publishing in English, though they often published manuals previously distributed from London or had a preface which the author signed ‘London, [date]’.⁶³⁷ The location had an element of prestige; etiquette writers wanted readers to believe that they were writing (and portraying life) from the heart of British high society, where the tone was set by the *ton* (and also, given some of this chapter’s focus, the professional centre).

Locating the discourse of etiquette within the context of the city (and with a high degree of concentration on London) allows for a reading of etiquette manuals that provides insights into Victorian metropolitanism, and (more particularly) into how the publishing industry offered assistance to those wanting help (or persuadable that they might benefit from help) in navigating a changing urban scene. Social history of the eighteenth-century has highlighted the cultural importance of London and its yearly Season.⁶³⁸ In the nineteenth century, although the

⁶³⁶ ‘A Case of Local Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶³⁷ See for example: Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society with a Glance at Bad Habits*, 26th edition (Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1849), p. 8, where Day signs off the preface: “London, January 20th, 1836.

⁶³⁸ See for example: Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London*, First edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

industrialising North took on an increased importance, more and more people kept being drawn to the capital, with a five-fold increase in population over the course of the century.⁶³⁹ Examining the social implications of the rapid urban growth and demographic change after 1811, Michael Anderson for example concludes that residents of both London and other cities with a population of over 100,000 increasingly experienced increasing ‘homogeneity of experience’, meaning that those living in London could (in theory) have a very similar cultural, social or familial experience to those living in other cities, as the large cities increasingly exhibited common key features.⁶⁴⁰

The output of etiquette manuals from provincial presses was small, but the examples that survive demonstrate a close interconnection between rules of conduct derived for the capital, and those that were held to pertain in other regions of Britain. ‘In every place’, writes Andrew Hobbs, ‘anywhere between one and a dozen local newspapers thrived as catalysts and chronicles [...] of local cultures’⁶⁴¹. And numbers were steadily increasing: Whereas around 375 provincial papers appeared until the mid-1850s, by the mid-1880s, this number had expanded to 1,225.⁶⁴² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s seminal *Family Fortunes* (1987) similarly highlighted the vitality of the provincial press in terms of domestic discourse, yet they also find that the provincial press was not hermetic. The *Gentleman’s Magazine*, *The Spectator*, and *The Magazine of Domestic Economy*—the most successful of the periodicals ‘aim[ing] to educate and improve the middling ranks’ — were all published from London but addressed to much wider audiences. Davidoff and Hall identify them as crucial in creating an appetite for ‘information and guidance in the increasingly complex everyday world’ by city and country readers alike.⁶⁴³ Equally, those geographic centres which were

⁶³⁹ F. H. W. Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶⁴⁰ Michael Anderson, ‘The Social Implications of Demographic Change’, in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. by F. M. L. Thompson, (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–70 (p. 66) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521257893.002>>.

⁶⁴¹ Andrew Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: The Provincial Press in England, 1855-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018), p. 4.

⁶⁴² Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 358.

⁶⁴³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Revised Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 156, p. 419.

close enough to permit day tourism into London supplemented their local papers with London news and advertisements.⁶⁴⁴

While most of the content of local presses was significantly different from that of London, as Hobbs has shown⁶⁴⁵, this in the main did not extend to material on manners and etiquette. Provincial presses mainly reproduced material coming from the capital. While these presses were essential in disseminating the discourse of etiquette across the country, I have yet to find any original output from the provincial press. If it does exist, it was overshadowed by all of the London-produced material.

From Country to City

When, in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Mr Bingley, much to the reader's amusement, upsets Mrs Bennet's poor nerves by declining her dinner invitation as he was 'obliged to be in town', it is clear that the 'town' he is referring to is London.⁶⁴⁶ London had become the prevalent 'town' in opposition to the country, so that from the eighteenth century onwards, the word 'town' (without article) carried clear reference to the capital.⁶⁴⁷ Despite this rather quaint title, Victorian London was already a large city. Since the late 1820s, a few years before the first etiquette manuals would appear on the market, London had been not only the biggest city in the United Kingdom, but also the biggest city in the world. The French philosopher Hippolyte Taine, unable to comprehend the vastness of London, described his impression of the capital from his visits in the 1860s as follows:

⁶⁴⁴ For example, the Ipswich Journal or the Chelmsford Chronicle, see also: Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 38.

⁶⁴⁵ See for example Chapter 4 'What They Read: The Production of the Local Press in the 1860s' in Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town*, pp. 143-176.

⁶⁴⁶ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 11. My italics.

⁶⁴⁷ "Town, n.", *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2014) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/64853> [accessed 9 March 2021], in particular section 4b.

Three million five hundred thousand inhabitants [...] in a single mass. Words on paper are no substitute for the effect on the eyes. You have to spend several days in succession in a cab, driving out north, south, east and west, for a whole morning, as far as those vague limits where houses grow scarcer and the country has room to begin.⁶⁴⁸

Taine witnessed London at a point in time when rapid expansion in size and population was already well underway. While the 1801 census counted a population of just over one million in Greater London, by 1851, this number had more than doubled (2.68 million). Numbers were rapidly expanding further in the coming years, so that by 1881 over 4.7 million people resided in the capital.⁶⁴⁹ The growing population can not only be attributed to decreasing child mortality and increasing longevity but reflect new movement into the city in search of business and social opportunities. Andrew Miles's findings attest to a degree of circularity in the logic of expansion, stating that 'migration, especially from the countryside to town, produced occupational and often social mobility', and 'increas[ed] the number of options available to their offspring'.⁶⁵⁰

In the second edition of his *Hints on Etiquette* (1834), the first etiquette manual to appear on the market, the author Charles William Day addresses this expansion in the population and the distinction it gave rise to between normative codes of social conduct in the city and the rules of behaviour holding sway elsewhere. 'It would be absurd', he wrote, 'to suppose that those persons who constitute the upper ranks of the middle classes in LONDON are ignorant of the regulations here laid down' implying that, through their daily life in London society, they should be very much familiar with these 'regulations' already.⁶⁵¹ On the other hand, 'in the country (especially the mercantile districts) where the tone of society is altogether lower', Day stated that 'it is far otherwise, although country people may not feel inclined to *acknowledge* what is, nevertheless,

⁶⁴⁸ Hippolyte Taine, *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1872) Quoted in: Roy Porter, *London, a Social History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 279.

⁶⁴⁹ Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 'A4 Population of Major Cities (in Thousands)', in *International Historical Statistics*, ed. by Palgrave Macmillan Ltd (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), pp. 3518–24 (p. 3518) <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-30568-8_391>.

⁶⁵⁰ Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 86.

⁶⁵¹ Day, *Hints on Etiquette*, p. 8.

strictly true'.⁶⁵² What Day precisely captured is not only a cultural divide between country and city dwellers, but a difference in the *force* of any prescriptive statements about daily behaviour and etiquette. While Day saw it as almost impossible to be ignorant of the rules when one lives in London (there is surely an element of flattery here for the city-based reader), he painted those in the regions as likely to be negligent of etiquette, even when coming to the city. The city set the tone for the wider country: ignorance of the rules he deemed (presumptively) unlikely; the question was whether or not the wider country chose to *execute* the rules consistently. In this way, etiquette surely generated an ethos, and thereby a market for itself: invoking a society in which etiquette was always already there, only in need of more consistent enactment.

Advice literature therefore catered to those wishing to be not only socially mobile, but also geographically mobile. Etiquette manuals explained the habits of London society in minute detail, feeding on the demographic development of the city, which enabled the boom of etiquette manuals from the 1840s onwards in the first place. The publishing magnate Daniel Macmillan of Macmillan & Co. describes the potential of this relatively untapped market in a letter from 1840: 'In this London for instance, [...] hundreds of them are continually coming here, fresh from the country [...] who very much stand in need of guide-books' and from the context of the letter it becomes clear that the 'guide-books' he had in mind were not guides containing city streets and institutions, but rather guides on conduct and behaviour.⁶⁵³ Macmillan's words signal the way in which the publishing industry was becoming aware of a new market and opportunities for capitalising on it.⁶⁵⁴ And capitalise the publishing houses did. In the 1840s alone, dozens of manuals appeared on the book market, each promising the same thing: that the reader would, by reading it, be equipped to blend in with London society.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵² Day, *Hints on Etiquette*, p. 8.

⁶⁵³ Thomas Hughes, *Memoir of Daniel Macmillan* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1883), p. 118.

⁶⁵⁴ Unfortunately for Macmillan, other publishers had beaten him to the chase so that his publishing house Macmillan & Co. never substantially contributed to the discourse of etiquette.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Chapter I: Creating Etiquette' discusses the book market at length.

The fictional story of Diggory Lawson, an unassuming young man who dared to venture into London, is one of many examples of the social trials such a move could bring. Diggory's experience was first recounted as a short story called 'The Lad Who Felt Like a Fish Out Of Water' by Thomas Cooper, a leading Chartist and poet. What was originally published as a moralising tale (and part of Cooper's Chartist agenda) warning against turning your back on your (class) origins, was distorted into a story about a young man eager to join London society to become successful. The *Leicestershire Mercury*, the publication Cooper was working for at the time, printed the revised version in 1845, before it was picked up by a variety of Northern and nationwide newspapers. The story ran as follows: Lawson senior, a middle-class bobbinet⁶⁵⁶ manufacturer, believes that sending his son to London is 'the way to set him off in the world, and make a real gentleman of him'.⁶⁵⁷ Polishing the social skills of the son and developing connections in London will, surely, facilitate the expansion of the family business. 'Never having quitted his native shire', Diggory leaves for London in the early 1840s, when the rapid expansion of London is already well underway.⁶⁵⁸ It is no wonder then that young Diggory is portrayed as under immense pressure to become accomplished in the manners of polite society. This is not only a competition between classes but a specific jostling for position between newcomers to the city.

Under the wing of one of his father's business associates, Diggory is introduced to society, yet quickly 'fe[els] like a fish out of water'.⁶⁵⁹ Among his first stops in London are a bookshop, where he purchases an etiquette guide (other stops supply him with the appropriate wardrobe). With this guide in his pocket, Diggory is confident that he is a 'match for his new compeers' and eagerly awaits a dinner party held the same evening.⁶⁶⁰ Yet during the evening, Diggory comes to

⁶⁵⁶ The bobbinet was a machine to manufacture lace. It was introduced in the early 1800s and simplified the painstaking process of lacemaking significantly. Bobbinet also refers to the type of lace manufactured on this machine.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Diggory Lawson', p. 5.

⁶⁵⁸ 'Diggory Lawson', p. 5.

⁶⁵⁹ 'Diggory Lawson', p. 5.

⁶⁶⁰ 'Diggory Lawson', p. 5.

realise that familiarity with the etiquette manual cannot make up for his country boy education: he commits many a faux pas, and when it comes to carving, an honour given to him as a newcomer, it is even joked that he knows ‘no more about carving a fowl than conducting a ship to China’—a mortifying assessment, which ungracefully concluded Diggory’s London experience.⁶⁶¹

Etiquette manuals were conscious of readers like the fictional young Diggory and sometimes adapted certain passages to their needs so that they could more practically navigate the urban social scene. *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (1860) for example closes its section on dinner parties with hints for those in Diggory’s position:

In concluding this subject, we will add a few observations of importance to young persons and to novices in society. Nothing shows people’s good breeding so much as the proper mode of eating. Some individuals, whose superior talents and superior industry have raised them above station in which they were born, and introduced them into society, the habits of which differ from those to which they were accustomed, may avoid many little mistakes by attention to the following rules [...]⁶⁶²

The rules that follow, such as ‘eat as quietly as possible’ and ‘avoid making noises in supping your soup’, are very basic compared to the preceding, more complex directions on dinner party etiquette.⁶⁶³ Diggory’s particular guide, presumably, did not include such guidance for novices.

Diggory’s case shows that studying the rules of etiquette frequently simply was not enough to save a newcomer from embarrassment. Though etiquette writers promised to save ‘the blush’ on their readers’ faces, it was a promise they could not reliably keep.⁶⁶⁴ Diggory’s story is an etiquette-handbook version of a theme explored in so many novels of the time, including Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861) and Trollope’s *Phineas Finn* (1869). Though one has to be mindful of the disparity between a narrative convention in fiction (often comic in its rendition) and lived experience, but this narrative kept cropping up in fiction for a reason. It is therefore not too farfetched to assume that Diggory’s experience might have been a representation of the experience

⁶⁶¹ ‘Diggory Lawson’, p. 5.

⁶⁶² *The Hand-Book of Etiquette: Being a Complete Guide to the Usages of Polite Society* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1860), p. 23.

⁶⁶³ *The Hand-Book of Etiquette*, p. 23.

⁶⁶⁴ Day, *Hints on Etiquette*, p. 8.

of out-of-towners moving to London, as the case study of the two friends Anne Stourges Bourne and Marianne Dyson, discussed later on in this part, will signal.

In Diggory's case, the unpractised use of etiquette as a tool to fit in marks him as an outsider. Etiquette literature contained direct warnings to that effect—for example, 'a ridiculous story', told in *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public*, 'of a poor lady who took her place suddenly in good society (and by her want of knowledge and strange blunders furnished laughter to most of the dinner-tables of the season)'.⁶⁶⁵ Statements such as these are commonplace in etiquette literature and are meant to inspire fear in those readers who genuinely feel themselves to be social novices. From another perspective, Diggory falls victim to the etiquette markets central ploy: a promise of easy assimilation into high society by way of learned codes, whereas in reality social blending was and is a much more difficult feat. Diggory's fate surely did, in practice, befall many other young men and women who moved to London for work and found themselves excluded from polite or fashionable or business society because they were unfamiliar with etiquette.

The differences between Thomas Cooper's original story, urging the aspirational labouring classes to honouring their origins, and the rewriting of the tale by a newspaper editor before syndication are marked. The *Leicestershire Mercury's* editor seems to have felt that their adaptation into a cautionary tale was more entertaining or interesting to contemporary audiences.⁶⁶⁶ Diggory's faults go beyond not knowing how to carve and are in fact far graver. He transgresses the one rule that underlies all etiquette manuals: never assume yourself equal to your superiors. And to Diggory, a middle-class boy from out of town (without title or station), this means all the guests at this London dinner party. Unbeknownst to Diggory, etiquette is not simply a helpful tool with which to make himself 'a match for his new compeers'; it is also a mode of social regulation.⁶⁶⁷ By allowing

⁶⁶⁵ *Modern Etiquette, in Private and Public* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1871), p. 23.

⁶⁶⁶ Interestingly, the short story's author, Thomas Cooper, was on the staff of the *Leicestershire Mercury*, so it could even be the original author himself adapting his story to suit a wider audience.

⁶⁶⁷ 'Diggory Lawson', p. 5.

Diggory to carve and then ridiculing him for not knowing how, the Londoners clearly signalled that Diggory was no match for them after all.

While the city was, as Asa Briggs notes, culturally a ‘symbol of growth and progress’, it was also ‘a matter of concern’ for many, who saw it as ‘urban threat both to property and to tradition’.⁶⁶⁸ Constant expansion meant a constant influx of new competition, threatening not only the livelihood of Londoners, but also the social order of the higher strata. ‘In the village’, Briggs finds, there was in operation ‘a social system where people knew their place and other people knew what that place was’.⁶⁶⁹ The city endangered this structure. ‘In the city, personal contact was more difficult, and the idea of social place was jeopardized’.⁶⁷⁰ Spatial separation of individual classes was one measure by which class control was exercised; the upper classes concentrated in the City, the fashionable West End, and other prosperous neighbourhoods whereas, particularly as the nineteenth century progressed and geographical division increased, the lower classes tended to reside in the East. In *Sybil* (1845) the later prime minister Benjamin Disraeli famously described the class divide of London as

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same [...] THE RICH AND THE POOR.⁶⁷¹

Though Disraeli's observation was not geographical, his words still described the discrepancies between classes which could be felt across the city.

Active social regulation through the observance of etiquette was not only felt by those wishing to permanently relocate to London, but also those who visited temporarily. Tourists, either for an extended period or only for the day, flooded London's streets. Already before the railway

⁶⁶⁸ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 59-60.

⁶⁶⁹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 63.

⁶⁷⁰ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 63.

⁶⁷¹ Benjamin Disraeli and Nicholas Shrimpton, *Sybil, or, The Two Nations*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 211.

made travelling fast and affordable, up to forty public passenger coaches per day were travelling to and from the provinces to London by the 1820s, allowing people to shop, attend meetings or see friends and return home the same evening.⁶⁷² With this surge in day-visitors, many travelling guides appeared, for foreigners and British tourists alike, which advised readers not only of the most interesting sights, but also how they should behave in the capital.

There is, in short, a distinct area of overlap between the city guide and the etiquette manual. *The Stranger's London Guide* (1834) hints that only a certain kind of visitor will be allowed in the fashionable West End. The author for example remarks that only 'respectably dressed persons may obtain admittance' to the British Museum, while St. James's Park 'is open to respectable persons from eight till sunset', and the 'fashionable summer promenade' Kensington gardens is 'open [...] to all respectable persons'.⁶⁷³ The places named above were all public, yet still it was made understood that only a certain kind of behaviour and 'respectability' would be tolerated in the place where the upper classes promenaded and browsed. *The British Metropolis in 1851: A Classified Guide to London* (1851), which appeared roughly twenty years later, lists 'Bond-Street and Regent-Street' as a sight: 'about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, on a fine day, during the "season," these being the fashionable shopping locality of the aristocracy, present the stranger with some idea of the wealth and luxury of the higher classes of the English people'.⁶⁷⁴ At the same time, it is made clear to the readers that they are merely spectators and are not to disturb or – worse – partake in the activities of the upper classes.

Even those who were visiting friends were not exempt from strict etiquette protocols and had to be on their best behaviour. A case study of the correspondence between Ann Sturges Bourne (*1809) and Marianne Dyson gives some insight into how friendly groups comprising

⁶⁷² Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 47 – 48.

⁶⁷³ Francis Coghlan, *The Stranger's London Guide*, 2nd Edition (London: Thomas Geeves, 1834), p. 56, p. 59.

⁶⁷⁴ *The British Metropolis in 1851: A Classified Guide to London* (London: A. Hall, Virtue & Co., 1851), p. 193.

families from different situations or backgrounds, negotiated the urban space and the rules attached to it. Ann was the daughter of Anne Bowles, the granddaughter of a baronet, and William Sturges Bourne, a wealthy politician and poor law reformer and son of the prebendary of Winchester.⁶⁷⁵ Her family owned Great Testwood House near Southampton but spent most of their time in London due to her father's seat in Parliament and brief appointment as home secretary. Her family lived on South Audley Street, right in the heart of exclusive Mayfair, the key location for aristocratic socialisation. Little is known about Marianne Dyson, save that she lived in the small town of Lavington in Petworth, Sussex. The pair was in frequent touch via letters, from which can be seen that Ann seems to have been living an almost stereotypical upper-middle-class life in London. Her days were given structure by social engagements such as afternoon teas, calls, dinner parties, and balls, of which she wrote to her friend. Marianne, on the other hand, only seldomly reported on such outings and events, and seems to have had a much quieter social life in the country.

Marianne occasionally made the trip to London to visit her friend, as she did in the summer of 1829. Ann was twenty years old at this time, a point in her life when it would have been important for her, according to etiquette manuals, to secure a husband. June 1829, the height of the London Season, was full of social engagements for Ann, which Marianne took part in as Ann's guest from the country. After the visit, Ann wrote to her friend: 'you were much approved of on Monday & that barring a little putting forward of the head and glueing [sic] hands to belt, you perform the part of a lady very well'⁶⁷⁶. What at first seems like a simple compliment has deeper facets. As a guest (especially from out of town) Marianne needed to be 'approved of' and Ann was quick to point out the behaviour that separated Marianne from her London circle and exposed her

⁶⁷⁵ For more information on Ann's father, see: David Eastwood, *Bourne, William Sturges (1769–1845), Politician and Poor-Law Reformer* (Oxford University Press, June 2004), 1 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3012>> [accessed 10th of March 2021].

⁶⁷⁶ Ann Sturges Bourne, 'Letter from Ann Sturges Bourne to Marianne Dyson, from London to Lavington, Petworth, Sussex', June 1829, Winchester Archive, 9M55/F7/17, unpaginated.

as an outsider. Ann's conscious choice of the word 'perform' is very important. It highlights her awareness of the fact that it did indeed require a *performance* in order to participate in London society. Her friend Marianne, now in London, looking to perform in the same way as Ann, slipped up in two minor details, which was immediately noticed by the social circle. Even though some of the rules London society dictated did not make sense to Ann, she complied with the expectation placed upon her to conform. In the rare instances she did not, she experienced guilt: 'I do that wicked thing of riding late in the park. Why it is worse than going out in the morning, I do not know'.⁶⁷⁷

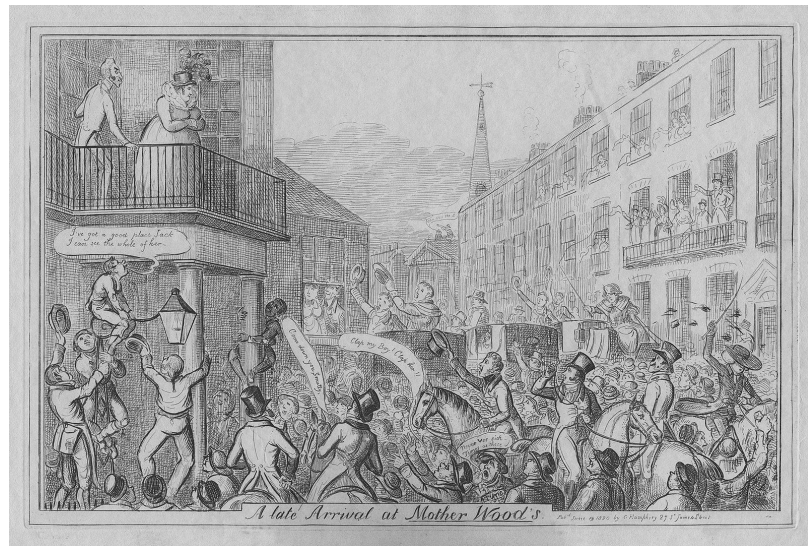


Fig. 30 Robert Cruikshank, 'A late Arrival at Mother Wood's', 1820. Caroline of Brunswick waving to crowds in South Audley Street, the exclusive Mayfair location where Ann's family lived in London. © National Portrait Gallery London

For Marianne to be invited into London society by her friend was not necessarily a given. The author of *All About Etiquette* (1875) wrote of 'persons who, having accepted, when in the country, much kindness from the country people, are ashamed to recognize them when they come

⁶⁷⁷ Bourne, 'Letter to Marianne Dyson', unpaginated.

to town on account of their rustic or unfashionable attire'.⁶⁷⁸ Though this kind of behaviour is described as 'vulgar and contemptible, and is always seen through and despised', it was a real possibility.⁶⁷⁹ It was a possibility that indeed became reality for Lady Catherine, a case study from Davidoff's *Best Circles* (1986). After her marriage in the 1840s, Lady Catherine relocated to Woodeaton, a small town about six miles from Oxford. Catherine was looking forward to the intellectual society that the city had to offer, 'but found to her disappointment that it was not then considered etiquette for the Country to mix with the University (or the City), so she spent her lifetime on the borders of the Promised Land only entering it on the rarest occasions'.⁶⁸⁰ Lady Catherine's case is a clear example of how restrictive etiquette could be, especially when it came to country dwellers visiting the city, just as it had been for Marianne and surely many others before and after them.

From City to Country

'God made the country, and man made the town.'
—William Cowper, *The Task*, Book I, 1785

Separation of country and city as social, as much as geographic, spheres is a recurring theme in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses. The town or city was often thought to be full of the dangers of urban life and man-made evils, such as crime, pollution and debauchery. Life in the country, on the other hand, was frequently presented as soothing, peaceful and harmonious. But as far as etiquette was concerned, the delineation of city and country was not as strict as Cowper suggested. The fact that etiquette was a phenomenon of the city, and especially of London, did

⁶⁷⁸ *All about Etiquette; or, The Manners of Polite Society: For Ladies, Gentlemen, and Families* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1875), p. 176.

⁶⁷⁹ *All about Etiquette*, p. 176.

⁶⁸⁰ Mrs Gell, *Under Three Reigns 1860-1920* (London: 1927), p. 84. Quoted in: Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 72.

not mean that it did not apply beyond the limits of the city. As we have seen, the provincial press discussed etiquette, and even though what it printed mostly replicated content from London publications, the fact that advice on etiquette appeared plentiful suggests a certain interest for the topic around the country, and especially in the towns and cities. While the first half of this chapter suggests the codification of etiquette found in the manuals was being used to articulate - and to protest against - casual assumptions of the superiority of London polite society over the social mores found elsewhere, this part examines in how far a reversal of this social control was applied when Londoners visited the countryside.

Chapter XIII of *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners*, published in London in 1870, deals with precisely this circumstance. Under the heading of 'Visiting at a Country House' the author points out that city-based 'Visitors are bound by the laws of social intercourse to conform in all respects to the habits of the house'.⁶⁸¹ Adapting to the rules of your host was a basic expectation of polite sociability, in line with the general ethos of guest etiquette not to be burdensome or rude and to blend in with your environs. The rules to adhere to that the manual describes, are strikingly similar to those employed in the city. Punctuality was expected when it came to dinner (the main social event of the day), criticism of named individuals, or controversial topics were to be avoided, and civility but not familiarity was to be observed towards servants.⁶⁸² Though the author makes allowances for the changed environment in saying that at least at lesser meals such as breakfast, 'absolute punctuality ought not to be expected' and that 'guests should be permitted to take breakfast when they please', there is still the sense that upper-(middle-)class life in the country was meant to emulate London protocol in some circumstances.⁶⁸³ In his extensive study of etiquette guides, Michael Curtin goes so far as to say that the 'exclusive system' of London etiquette had 'spread into the countryside where house parties, once the centre of local sociability,

⁶⁸¹ Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1870), p. 227.

⁶⁸² Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society*, pp. 227-230.

⁶⁸³ Countess of *****, *Mixing in Society*, p. 227.

now merely reproduced the London season in a different setting'.⁶⁸⁴ While this was true for balls or dinners (judging from etiquette guides), Curtin's assumption is slightly too homogenising, or rather, not sufficiently nuanced.

Adaptation was key to country etiquette. Though the same sorts of social events were bound to happen in the country and the city and demanded some code of etiquette to be followed, country codes were not merely an emulation of the city but were adapted to the changed circumstance. Whereas morning calls in the city were for example a short and ceremonious affair, they were more extensive in the country. The author of *Manners and Tone of Good Society* (1879) notes that in London, 'the hostess would on no account ask her visitor if she "will take any refreshment"'—"and a glass of wine and a biscuit" [...] to do so would be considered a breach of good manners', as the visitor is simply following social duty in calling which should not take more than fifteen minutes.⁶⁸⁵ In comparison, 'in the country it *is* customary to offer a glass of sherry to gentlemen callers, and to order tea for the lady visitors, even though the call were made rather early in the afternoon, and a little before the hour for having tea'.⁶⁸⁶ In London, members of one's social circle were often relatively close neighbours, conveniently reached within a few minutes. In the country, on the other hand, acquaintances could be many miles distant, so a longer visit and refreshments are a logical conclusion when one is travelling up to an hour (or even more) rather than minutes and for the same reason far fewer social engagements are likely to have been kept in a day.

While country balls might have somewhat emulated London protocol, there is plenty of evidence that large and prominent gentry families did not try to run their festivities entirely according to the rules of the capital and sometimes even ignored 'good etiquette' altogether. In an

⁶⁸⁴ Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners*, Modern European History (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 91.

⁶⁸⁵ A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 3rd Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879), p. 29.

⁶⁸⁶ *Manners and Tone of Good Society*, p. 29.

examination of the letters and diaries of the Mordaunt family, Elizabeth Hamilton presents a case study of such a family.⁶⁸⁷ Sir Charles Mordaunt, the patriarch of the family, was a wealthy landowner and a member of Parliament. His family resided on a lavish country estate, Walton Hall, in Warwickshire (Fig. 31).



Fig. 31 Walton Hall, Warwickshire, Home of Baronet Mordaunt, c1880.

Though their estate was far from humble, Hamilton notes the Mordaunts' 'strong dislike of ostentation and extravagance which was disparagingly described as "fineness"'—not only when it came to possessions, but primarily when it came to behaviour and etiquette.⁶⁸⁸ Such case studies show that etiquette was not universally applied and that a preference for informality, and dislike of London 'show', were not uncommon among wealthy landed gentry family.

In many ways, the country presented a refuge from the constraints of etiquette experienced in the city. Returning to the case study of the two friends Ann Sturges Bourne and Marianne

⁶⁸⁷ Elizabeth Hamilton, 'Life on a Country Estate in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, No. 34, 1991.

⁶⁸⁸ Elizabeth Hamilton, 'Life on a Country Estate', p. 3.

Dyson: Ann not only points out her friend's flaws but also her virtues. 'I have a pleasant recollection of Monday,' Ann writes: 'I discovered how much better your ideas of one's behaviour in society, were than mine'.⁶⁸⁹ She is referring to Marianne's less artificial country airs. At points, it seems as if Ann is almost regretful of the constraints London life puts on her, constraints which Marianne does not have to follow in her home. A few years earlier, she had lamented to her friend that she longed to be at their country home Testwood, free to do walking, riding, and reading instead of being in London and 'Racketing in this dirty noisy mad town'.⁶⁹⁰



Fig. 32 Photograph of Ann Sturges Bourne's family's country estate 'Great Testwood House', shortly before it was demolished in 1920.

A ten-minute walk from Ann's house, thirty-nine-year-old Charles St George was feeling similarly about the refuge a country estate provided. Charles Manners St George, Esq, DL, JP (1786-1864) was a diplomat resident in Dover Street, London's exclusive Mayfair. In the 1820s and 30s, the Cambridge-educated St George held the position of secretary of legation, the highest rank in the Italian embassy, located just off Grosvenor Square, Mayfair. Even though Charles was

⁶⁸⁹ Bourne, 'Letter to Marianne Dyson', unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁰ Ann Sturges Bourne, 'Letter from Ann Sturges Bourne to Marianne Dyson, from South Audley Street, London to Lavington, Petworth, Sussex', 18 May 1824, Winchester Archive, 9M55/F2/6, unpaginated.

a bachelor, he had a very active social life due to his role and privately, which is recorded in the many letters to his mother, Melesina Trench. In the spring of 1825, he took a trip to the country to stay with friends and to enjoy their 'Genre de Vie' as he calls it, their easy-going country lifestyle:

As to our Genre de Vie during the 10 Days I staid [sic], I cannot better describe it, than by saying we did what we liked as to separate Meals, hours of rising, walking, jointly or solely, – reading, music, Untill 2 P.M. Dinner Time when we met [...] – After which we played Chess, took a stroll, paid a Visit en masse, went to sleep till ½ past seven, – when we invariably met, as by tacit Consent, around the Tea Table, – & either by Chess, patience (on the Cards I mean) or a little Music or Conversation, eked out the Evening till ¼ past Nine Supper time: – at which we usually all performed, as we dined at 2, – we went to bed regularly at ten. I got up invariably between 5 & 6. – & I never passed a Day without walking 5 Miles. – This quiet, unexciting, healthy fortnight, has made me if possible better than well, – as I trust to present myself at Montague Square in due Season.⁶⁹¹

Charles's depiction of a fortnight in the country demonstrates the stark contrast of (social) life pace between the city and the country. He seems almost gleeful when he wrote to his mother about unfixed dinner times, refreshing exercise and quiet entertainment. The only instance he described as more regulated is the evening meal. As *Mixing in Society* detailed, this was the main social event of the day, and codes of etiquette were to be adhered to (although on a lesser scale) even in the country. St George explains it required a 'performance' from everyone, and that even though there might not have been a physical need for the meal due to a rich lunch, there was a social need for one. Despite this one unavoidable and more constraining engagement, George clearly felt that the relaxation of etiquette in the country was 'healthy', beneficial to him, and a welcome change from his London life. In the end, however, he was aware that this refuge was but temporary, and that with the upcoming Season, he was expected to 'present himself' in Montague Square in Mayfair.

The one kind of social event in which Londoners bowed to country etiquette was hunting. Among those who did not own property in the country, and who had the means, renting a country home during hunting season or staying with friends was common practice. Here, city dwellers, no

⁶⁹¹ Charles St George, 'Letter from Charles St George to His Mother, Melesina Trench', Spring 1825, Winchester Archive, 23M93/15/1/204, unpaginated.

matter what station they held, were guests of the estate and would inevitably have to bend to the existing rules of the locals.

Breaches of hunting etiquette were not as frequently reported on as breaches of etiquette in the city, yet taken very seriously, nonetheless. In November 1849, for example, guests of the Earl of Lonsdale committed a serious breach. Mayor Hope, 'Master of the Oakley Hounds', appealed to Lord Lonsdale in a matter of "a violation of Hunting Etiquette" by his Lordships Establishment (of course in his absence).⁶⁹² 'The circumstances stated to Mayor Hope are these', the letter continues, 'a fox turned down before the Earl of Lonsdale Harrier & ran to the ground in the country above mentioned. & notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Keeper present was dug out & killed'.⁶⁹³ According to hunting etiquette, it was not the one spotting and chasing the fox who was entitled to it, but the one on whose land the fox was eventually cornered or dug out. The Earl of Lonsdale's guests disregarded this custom and dug the fox out anyway, which, according to Mayor Hope was later angrily 'discussed on the hunting field' where the incident first came to his attention.⁶⁹⁴

The Earl, being of the country himself, seemingly took the issue very seriously. He wrote to the parties involved and had five different responses to the Mayor's letter drafted, each of them stating that 'Lord Lonsdale wishes to avoid every cause of complaint'.⁶⁹⁵ He agrees with the Mayor and finds that 'it is contrary to the general understanding to dig a fox in another Gentleman's Country & he will give strict orders to stop such a practise in future & regrets the occurrence having taken place'.⁶⁹⁶ He apologises for his company, explaining that 'some excuse' might be made for them, 'thinking that the rule might not apply to a fox trained for running themselves', ergo

⁶⁹² Earl of Lonsdale, 'Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette in Bedfordshire', November - December 1849, Carlisle Archive Centre, DLONS/L/1/2/154, unpaginated.

⁶⁹³ Earl of Lonsdale, 'Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette', unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁴ Earl of Lonsdale, 'Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette', unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁵ Earl of Lonsdale, 'Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette', unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁶ Earl of Lonsdale, 'Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette', unpaginated.

being ignorant of correct hunting etiquette.⁶⁹⁷ The issue dragged on. The duke took every measure to ensure his reputation and apologised profusely, something that, judging from his archive, he was not used to doing. Finally, after a whole month had passed and countless letters were drafted and exchanged, he stated that he had ‘no doubt that all is rested’.⁶⁹⁸

Though one has to be careful not to generalise from these findings, the case studies contribute to a picture of the countryside having its own codes of etiquette. The important difference from the city is that activities which do not occur in the city (such as hunting) are codified in great detail, (through passed-on knowledge amongst participants), but there is little or no printed record of such specific country etiquette as far as I can determine. This would explain the uncertainty the guests of the Earl of Lonsdale exhibited about social conventions when hunting in the country. Combined with the fact that London-specific rules were not fully re-written, but rather adapted to need, it can be concluded that the etiquette in print was well and truly a product of the city, and more precisely, that of London. It established London, the home of the aristocracy and of fashionable society, as the seat of taste and ensured its social dominance, in general etiquette, at least.

Etiquette and Travel: Manners Domestic and Abroad⁶⁹⁹

Travel and tourism flourished in the Victorian Age, earning from historians the epithet the ‘travelling age’.⁷⁰⁰ As a *Times* article phrased it in 1846, ‘All the world travels now-a-days’, and

⁶⁹⁷ Earl of Lonsdale, ‘Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁸ Earl of Lonsdale, ‘Letters about a Breach of Hunting Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁶⁹⁹ This part of the chapter was originally also going to talk about the engagement of Victorians with etiquette abroad and in the colonies, yet due archive closures as a consequence of COVID-19, I was unable to gain access to sufficient material.

⁷⁰⁰ Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, Studies in Modern History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 13.

indeed, traveling had become a lot more common thanks to better transport and accommodation and prices that were increasingly affordable for many.⁷⁰¹ As one author comments in 1862: ‘our forefathers contented themselves with a journey perhaps once every seven years; we, on the contrary, deem it not excessive to take seven journeys in one year’.⁷⁰² Traveling was no longer a luxury enjoyed only by the wealthy elite, their attendants, and certain trades and professions (most obviously, commercial travellers and itinerant clergy) but morphed into a recreational activity for the masses.⁷⁰³ For holidays away from home and abroad the volume and range of destinations expanded rapidly.⁷⁰⁴ Equally, day trips and short journeys came into popularity, leading to the terms ‘excursionists’ and ‘trippers’ being introduced into the vocabulary of travel (not always favourably).⁷⁰⁵

While travelling was thus starting to play an important part in Victorians’ lives, it also demanded an increased consciousness of cultural differences. A journey necessarily provoked a spatial dislocation of a person and sharing space or encountering unfamiliar space was a new and potentially disconcerting experience. The etiquette of train travel is a good example of how etiquette provided a framework and a sense of assurance for those new to travel. The ever popular *The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints* for example explains train journeys in the minutest detail providing a framework of social conventions for the use of those with no little or no prior experience of public travel.

⁷⁰¹ ‘The Tourist’(reprint of an article from *The Times*) In: *The Critic* (London, 28 March 1846), p. 332.

⁷⁰² *The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints, Suggestions, and Advice, Before the Journey, On the Journey, and After the Journey* (London: Lockwood and Co., Stationers’ Hall Court, 1862), p. 42.

⁷⁰³ Dory Agazarian has conducted an interesting, related study of how the elite forged aristocratic patterns for travelling, especially in regard to Rome, and how these conceptions of travel were challenged by the growing masses in the 19th century. See: Dory Agazarian, ‘Victorian Roads to Rome: Historical Travel in the Wake of the Grand Tour’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 37.5 (2015), pp. 391–409 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08905495.2015.1080883>> [accessed on the 7th of July 2021].

⁷⁰⁴ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure: The British Experience since 1500* (Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 170.

⁷⁰⁵ Ian Ousby, *The Englishman’s England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 18.

The railway was quite possibly the most popular way to travel and evolved from a journey exposed to the elements in carriages, stagecoaches, wagons or on horseback at the beginning of the 19th-century to a much more luxurious experience at the dawn of the Victorian Age, complete with dining, sleeping and toilet facilities (at least for the second and first classes).⁷⁰⁶ Stations were being built all over the country from the 1820s onwards, and, as Michael Freeman remarks, many contemporaries likened ‘the magnitude of railway earth and masonry works as comparable to the constructions of ancient Egypt’.⁷⁰⁷

While almost every aspect of the Victorian railway has been chronicled, researched and mapped out by historians, the passengers’ experiences while on the train are only rarely considered. Ralph Harrington and Philippa Bignell are exceptions, though they focus their analysis on the experience of modernity, rather than examining behaviour. My interest lies in the goings-on of train carriage, in the train not only as a vehicle to transport passengers from point a to point b, but also as a social location in itself. Joseph de Sapio has argued that the train carriage provoked a ‘mentality of membership’ among passengers, which necessitated ‘new social rules governing interpersonal contact while on a journey’.⁷⁰⁸ It was indeed a profoundly new experience for many, which propagated etiquette to define this space for its readers.

When train travel was newly introduced in the 1820s, travellers accustomed to clear expectations around etiquette in other places noticed its absence on the train. ‘Railroad etiquette does not seem to be fixed’ laments Ann Sturges Bourne in 1829, after an unfortunate train carriage

⁷⁰⁶ David Turner, *Victorian and Edwardian Railway Travel*, Shire Library, no. 689 (Oxford, United Kingdom: Shire Publications, 2013), p. 5. See also: Ruth Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁷⁰⁷ Michael J. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 15.

⁷⁰⁸ Joseph De Sapio, ‘Transient Communities: Travel, Knowledge, and the Victorian Railway Carriage, 1840–90’, *Mobilities*, 8.2 (2013), 201–19 (p. 202–203) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2012.659472>> [accessed on the 7th of June 2021].

experience, in a letter to her friend.⁷⁰⁹ Ann was a member of the upper classes, so she unsurprisingly found it strange when someone talked to her without being introduced, and later complained about the ‘inconvenience of a public carriage being that some disagreeable person may talk to you’.⁷¹⁰ About sixty years later, in 1888, the picture looked different: A *Times* article reported of the ‘established etiquette of the bus or train, which draws the line cleverly between altruism and egoism’, summarising the anonymous and distant, yet still superficially friendly, travel customs etiquette manuals advised.⁷¹¹

In print, the etiquette of travel was being thematised roughly from the late 1840s onwards, coinciding with the first big surge in travelling and the publication of more elaborate etiquette guides; tomes like *The Habits of Good Society* (388 pages) and *Social Observances* (260 pages) included extensive notes on travel. There were also pamphlets and short guides solely occupied with the topic. The most relevant manual for this discussion is *The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints*, published by Lockwood in the early 1850s. The eighteen pence, 140-page book, half instruction manual and half etiquette guide, was sold at railway stations and covered every conceivable aspect of train travel, which is why it will often appear in the following discussion.⁷¹²

One of the novelties of railway travel was the sharing of a confined space. *The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints* likens the experience to that of a prisoner ‘who is denied that essential ingredient to human happiness, personal liberty’.⁷¹³ The etiquette manual *Social Observances* (1896) judges train travel equally negatively, and blames the fellow passengers for this: ‘Oftener than not a journey by rail is the reverse of pleasurable, and, consequently, its termination the nearest approach to that sentiment. [...] Commodious carriages, fast trains, civil and obliging guards and

⁷⁰⁹ Ann Sturges Bourne, ‘Letter from Ann Sturges Bourne to Marianne Dyson, from London to Lavington, Petworth, Sussex’, June 1829, Winchester Archive, 9M55/F7/17, unpaginated.

⁷¹⁰ Bourne, ‘Letter to Marianne Dyson’, June 1829, unpaginated.

⁷¹¹ ‘Popular Etiquette’ [Reprint from *The Times*], *Kirkintilloch Herald* (Dunbartonshire, 15 August 1888), p. 8.

⁷¹² *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel: Spaces, Nations and Empires*, edited by Barbara Franchi, and Elvan Mutlu, Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2018, p. 138.

⁷¹³ *The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints*, p. 75.

porters, are the rule and not the exception, and it is simply the travellers themselves who make travelling what it is'.⁷¹⁴ The author 'Au Fait' observes that 'it would seem that they laid their Christian principles aside for the journey', and in the following pages explains how to reserve a seat, how to be a considerate passenger, and how to not inconvenience others with your luggage.⁷¹⁵ These explanations however also serve ulterior purposes. Not only do they give the reader peace of mind, but they also put the readers in charge of their train experience. The rule for reserving a seat with an item placed upon the seat, for example, rescues the traveller from being at the mercy of the porter who might find him or her a less agreeable seat.

The train carriage also created a situation which now only rarely happened in the city: here, different classes, sexes, and backgrounds were thrown together randomly and unavoidably. 'Railway travelling be so general, and railway travellers from so numerous a class', comments *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, which is why the manual pays 'special attention of the various classes of railway traveller'.⁷¹⁶ Of course differential ticket prices somewhat regulated the kind of passengers one was exposed to. As a rule, a first-class ticket was double the price of third-class ticket and a second-class ticket cost two thirds of a first-class ticket.⁷¹⁷ Each class had their standard occupants: The third class was for 'he who regards economy as of paramount importance', the second class for 'He who aims at combining respectability with a moderate charge', and the first class for 'he who is indifferent to cost, and studies his comfort only'.⁷¹⁸ This meant that different kinds of behaviour were expected by patrons of individual classes. Whereas the occupants in the first class were deemed 'occupants polite and well conducted', in the third class, one was 'destined to pass the next few hours of [...] existence tightly compressed between two rough specimens of

⁷¹⁴ Au Fait, *Social Observances: A Series of Essays on Practical Etiquette* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1896), p. 198.

⁷¹⁵ Au Fait, *Social Observances*, p. 200.

⁷¹⁶ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, pp. 1-2.

⁷¹⁷ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, pp. 34-35.

⁷¹⁸ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, p. 52.

humanity'.⁷¹⁹ De Sapio has similarly found that 'the comfort and style of the carriage' 'exerted an influence over both the size and type of community that could be formed. The isolated, plush compartments of first class crafted a grouping governed by very different rules of sociability compared with the carriage-spanning bare wooden benches of a third-class car'.⁷²⁰ Guidance on etiquette, therefore, had most relevance to those in the first (and second) class.

One could, however, never be certain that one would only meet those of similar social standing in one's chosen travel class. *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints* cites the case of

A London merchant [who] resided a few miles from the City, in an elegant mansion, to and from which he journeyed daily, and invariably by third class. It happened that one of the clerks in his employ lived in a cottage accessible by the same line of railway, but he always travelled first class; the same train thus presenting the anomaly of the master being in that place which one would naturally assign to the man, and the man appearing to usurp the position of the master.⁷²¹

Unlike other events that were proclaimed to be 'public' but yet were not (like Almanack's ball, discussed above, for which ticket sales were administered by a group of society ladies) train travel was genuinely 'public' and could not be regulated. There was no selection process of passengers, and the occupancy of a compartment was purely random within the wide demographic who could afford the price.

Etiquette literature's careful theoretical policies of exclusion and inclusion were incapable of enforcement, though etiquette writers came up with rules that would ensure that at least upon descending the train, the social hierarchy was quickly put back in place. The standard means to that end was 'cutting' any acquaintance made while aboard. Under normal circumstances, cutting a friend or acquaintance was condemned by etiquette. 'My advice to anybody who wishes to cut an acquaintance is most emphatically, Don't', advises *The Habits of Good Society*. 'In the first place, it is vulgar, and a custom which the vulgar affect [...] if you have once known people you should

⁷¹⁹ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, p. 53, 55.

⁷²⁰ Joseph De Sapio, 'Transient Communities', p. 205.

⁷²¹ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, p. 56.

always know them, if they have not done anything to merit indignation'.⁷²² Cutting someone was therefore a last resort, employed only if a person misbehaved unforgivably. Under normal circumstances, friends and acquaintances were carefully screened and selected (and of course of the same broad social standing) and exposure to random strangers was limited. To make the journey bearable, etiquette manuals permitted socialisation within the carriage *if both parties consented*. If a person's 'answers be curt, and he evidences a desire to be quiet, do not pursue the conversation'.⁷²³ A joint journey, however, does not of itself count as an introduction. *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints* reprimands readers that 'the acquaintance begotten in the railway carriage ceases with the journey, and although you may have conversed as freely with a person as though you had known him twenty years, you would not be justified in accosting him in the street subsequently'.⁷²⁴ *The Habits of Good Society* echoes this stricture: 'As a general rule, [the acquaintance] terminates when one of the parties leaves the carriage', ensuring that the traveller can have peace of mind of not leaving the train with an unwanted connection contrary his social circle.⁷²⁵

Additionally, etiquette could entail social signalling for travellers. Marjorie Morgan has found that 'when visiting the continent travellers often embraced the British identity inscribed on their passports, whereas excursions up, down, and across Britain itself tended to provoke more vehement affirmations of local identity'.⁷²⁶ By sticking to particular national varieties of etiquette, travellers could signal their sense of belonging to place(s) or when abroad, to the nation as a whole. This voiced itself for example in modes of address, as *Manners and Tone of Good Society* describes:

It would be correct to address an unmarried young foreign lady as "Mademoiselle" without the addition of her surname, even if she were the daughter of a vicomte or baron; but it would be extremely vulgar to address an English girl as "Miss" without adding the surname. A foreigner addressing an English girl as "Miss" would be excusable, as it is the

⁷²² *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 277, p. 279.

⁷²³ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 277, p. 288.

⁷²⁴ *The Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints*, p. 64.

⁷²⁵ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 288.

⁷²⁶ Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, Studies in Modern History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 4-5.

rule on the continent to address young ladies as “Mademoiselle,” without adding the surname.⁷²⁷

Applying etiquette could moreover be a means to enacting a certain notion of oneself for public consumption. Barbara Franchi and Elvan Mutlu have for example found that ‘Victorian travellers did not allow themselves to be joyous because this emotion would mean a sort of transgression of the rules dictated by restrained manners. One cared too much about what others – onlookers – thought of one’s conduct and therefore it had to be disciplined’.⁷²⁸ But using etiquette abroad could also be a way to familiarise unfamiliar places and spaces. The mid-Victorian Annabel Jackson reflected back on her journey to Zurich in the 1870s; there, she emulated the etiquette she was used to from her life in London and was downright ‘shocked to find that nobody dressed for dinner except on special occasions’.⁷²⁹

Finally, a last point to consider is another recourse to professional etiquette, which also demonstrates how etiquette was used to reflect a certain image of Britishness abroad. Etiquette seems to have been of vital importance when a working professionals represented the country of England outside of it, especially at official functions involving the coming together of different social codes of conduct applicable to one’s own and another culture. Breaching either local etiquette or one’s own national sense of etiquette could easily become someone’s undoing. In 1846, the *Morning Post* reported it a matter of ‘National Etiquette’ when a Mr. Barton, chargé d’affaires in Paris, was too ‘fatigued’ to dance with a French Princess at court.⁷³⁰ The journalist satirically adds: ‘If we have a war with France, it will be altogether of etiquette, a war that common prudence and common policy might have prevented’.⁷³¹ Though these might seem ‘small matters’

⁷²⁷ A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Tone of Good Society, Or, Solecisms to Be Avoided*, 3rd Edition (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879), p. 55.

⁷²⁸ *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel: Spaces, Nations and Empires*, ed. by Barbara Franchi and Elvan Mutlu (presented at the Victorian Travel and Imperial Spaces, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 139.

⁷²⁹ Annabel Huth Jackson, *A Victorian Childhood* (1932), p. 179. Quoted in: Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 84.

⁷³⁰ ‘National Etiquette’, *Morning Post* (London, 4 January 1846), unpaginated.

⁷³¹ ‘National Etiquette’, unpaginated.

in the eyes of his readership, the author argues that ‘small matters of this description in the etiquette of international intercourse often lead to important results’.⁷³² Mr Barton’s comportment was taken to reflect on the country he was representing, which is why his breach of etiquette was understood (part in jest, part seriously) to have such potentially grave consequences.

Similarly, a British government official in the colonies, Charles B. Croons was fired for offending against British etiquette, having expressed himself unfavourably towards a higher ranking official at an inopportune moment. His dismissal letter was made public in *The Examiner*, where the decision was justified as follows: ‘although the offence would in itself come under the head of extreme indiscretion, yet having been committed on a great state occasion, where court etiquette was enforced on all sides, his Excellency had no other course open to him than to order your immediate public dismissal and official disgrace’.⁷³³ His ‘offence’ might only have been a remark ‘while in the act of leaving the supper-room’ yet this was enough for a very public discharge.⁷³⁴ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1859) explains: ‘We keep a grand state official, with a high salary, for no other purposes than to preserve the formal etiquette of the Court’ and to portray to outsiders what British aristocratic behaviour was like.⁷³⁵ This last point could also describe what the many authors of the manuals we have discussed throughout this thesis at least presented themselves doing for their aspirational audiences.

⁷³² ‘National Etiquette’, unpaginated.

⁷³³ ‘Colonial Court Etiquette’, *The Examiner* (London, 9 August 1855), p. 7.

⁷³⁴ ‘Colonial Court Etiquette’, p. 7.

⁷³⁵ *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1859), p. 19.

CONCLUSION

The Lasting Effects of Etiquette

*Merehly from an antiquarian point of view, the study of etiquette has its value, for old-fashioned customs gave rise to ours, and the spirit of the times is embalmed in many of the ancient ways.*⁷³⁶

– *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1894)

Though the above quotation stems from an etiquette manual first published in the mid-1890s, the words still very much ring true today. This thesis has demonstrated that etiquette literature has indeed been overlooked and undervalued in historical scholarship. The previous chapters have aimed to give insights into some of the ‘old-fashioned customs’ (as they were considered in the 1890s) which etiquette manuals perpetuated and their importance as social currency. In the nineteenth century, etiquette played a key role as social marker and enabled social distinction that was not solely due to rank. In day-to-day life, as we have seen, ignoring or disobeying etiquette could have real consequences, much as following etiquette could carry real benefits.

Etiquette literature and its study provides insights into a changing social panorama, a burgeoning middle-class, and a society which was very much occupied with its hierarchal structure and the navigation of it. The role of etiquette literature in this social panorama was conflictingly ambiguous when it came to its treatment of class: on the one hand, it presented itself as a tool for upward social mobility, yet on the other, it very much encouraged the prevailing social order which placed those who were aristocratic by birth on top. Similarly, in the imagined world of etiquette manuals, ideals of gender were preserved and perpetuated, envisioning men as fending

⁷³⁶ *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen: Including the Etiquette of Weddings* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1894), pp. 9-10.

for the family in the economic sphere, while women tended house and entertained. These factors remained constants from the emergence of etiquette manuals in the mid-1830s, suggesting the cultural desire to enforce a conservative and stabilising vision of society when faced with one in flux.

The rapidly evolving book market played a key role in the development and success of etiquette literature; the texts could now be cheaply produced and pedalled to a much wider audience. As we have seen, the readers of etiquette literature were most likely not those addressed in the prefaces of manuals (they were more likely to be lower-middle class, rather than aristocratic), neither were the authors likely to have been the eminent figures which pseudonyms claimed they were. Yet this did not mean that they necessarily were cynically profiteering money makers either, as the case studies of Lady Colin Campbell, Thomas Nichols, and Emily Shirreff have shown, all of whom manipulated the genre to suit their wider agendas.

Looking more closely at the etiquette manuals themselves, specifically at their emergence and textual parameters, I have argued that the concept of etiquette did not evolve in an isolated way but showed similarities to earlier models of advice literature. Yet at the same time, etiquette manuals distinguished themselves from those precedents, through their linguistic composition and format, as well as their sharply codified expectations of societal intercourse and behaviour. Linguistic and structuralist analyses have furthermore shown how language was employed to manipulate and control readers' impressions and emotions, aiming to encourage compliance. At the same time, these systems of behaviour were sold as offering a recipe for success for those wishing to move up the social ladder.

Especially for women, as we have seen, etiquette manuals envisioned an ideology in which women (once they had become wives) were meant to act as 'guardians of society', regulate it through policing its gates and serving as impeccably behaved role models. Their idealised function was therefore not that of mother, friend, or companion, but rather that of 'hostess'. In order to achieve compliance from its female readers, etiquette manuals employed a range of strategies,

which included conservative propaganda of the female ideal, or even instilling fear of bodily harm. Yet etiquette not only varied according to gender, but also according to space. Examining etiquette in different spatial contexts (public and private, professional, country and city, and abroad) reveals that obeying the correct etiquette in a specific space was seen as a marker of respectability and status, as well as a marker of 'Britishness' abroad.

Despite its great popularity over a period of over sixty years, the genre gradually started to decline, starting in the 1890s. The numbers of new guides dropped significantly, as did the number of reprints issued. This decline did not go unnoticed or uncommented, and significantly, this reduction in etiquette literature seems to have been occurring at precisely the same time as a perceived decline in the social importance of correct etiquette. *The Standard*, for example, reported 'The Decay of Etiquette' in 1890.⁷³⁷ 'It can hardly be denied', states the reporter, 'that of late years the bonds of etiquette, both social and professional, have been sensibly relaxed'.⁷³⁸

Not only had these bonds relaxed, according to *The Standard*, but reluctance to break the codes of etiquette had similarly disappeared: 'The opinion of the fashionable world [previously, in the 1840s-80s] was then unanimous on certain points of behaviour, and no one who had pretensions to belong to a rank above that of the lower middle class ever dreamt of publicly breaking the rules of good manners'.⁷³⁹ Similarly, six years later, an article in the same newspaper waspishly commented: 'Etiquette for etiquette's sake must be the motto of those who insist on such social observances', suggesting that it now had little social importance.⁷⁴⁰

Thus, with the turn of the century, new modes of behaviour seemed to be evolving from the 'old-fashioned customs', claiming to abandon their rigidity and confinement. Richard Faber, for example, notes that 'the canons of Victorian society, though they once seemed so unalterable,

⁷³⁷ 'The Decay of Etiquette [Taken from the Standard]', *Belfast Weekly News* (Belfast, 25 January 1890).

⁷³⁸ 'The Decay of Etiquette'.

⁷³⁹ 'The Decay of Etiquette'.

⁷⁴⁰ 'Etiquette [Taken from the Standard]', *Bristol Mercury* (Bristol, Monday 06 January 1896).

no longer –or only dimly– prevail[ed]’ at the beginning of the 20th century, and particularly emphasises the abandonment of custom and restrictions in connection to class.⁷⁴¹ However, in regard to etiquette and the set of rules etiquette manuals prescribed, this abandonment was not entirely clear-cut, frequently leaving echoes reverberating through texts from the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) provides one prominent example which captures a moment in which the prescriptions of nineteenth-century etiquette manuals are echoed in modern life. The main protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway, had been born in the penultimate decade of Victoria’s reign and was still raised with the kinds of values, previously discussed extensively in ‘Chapter IV: Etiquette for Ladies’, which etiquette manuals promoted for women (such as obedience, passivity, and performance). Even though Clarissa rebelled against these values during her youth, in the post-war aftermath, Clarissa returns to the feminine ideal perpetuated on the pages of the etiquette book: the hostess. Clarissa’s party, the central event around which *Mrs Dalloway* revolves, is essentially a wake for a bygone time, with Clarissa at the heart of it. Very much like a Victorian lady was supposed to carry herself according to etiquette manuals, ‘Clarissa tries to equate the performance of this role with her identity’, as Shannon Forbes has pointed out.⁷⁴² Clarissa’s behaviour follows what *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (1876) prescribed to all women: ‘be observant [...] modest and self-sacrificing’, in order to be ‘sure of succeeding’ socially.⁷⁴³ Just as the author of the manual recommends to his reader, Clarissa equally does ‘not rest satisfied without endeavouring to attain this goal’.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴¹ Richard Faber, *Proper Stations: Class in Victorian Fiction* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 9.

⁷⁴² Shannon Forbes, ‘Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway’s Victorian “Self”’ In: *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Special Convention Issue: Performance (Spring, 2005), pp. 38-50 (p. 39) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30039298> [Accessed on the 27th May 2022].

⁷⁴³ Virginia Woolf and Sarah McNichol (ed.), *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Penguin Classics, 2019), p. 26.

⁷⁴⁴ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 10.

The depth of Clarissa's commitment to her role is furthermore reflected in the narrative structure of the novel; she frequently has thoughts such as: 'women must put off their rich apparel. At mid-day they must disrobe'.⁷⁴⁵ Rules like this are directly enclosed in her stream of consciousness and are semantically very similar to the language of etiquette manuals, which Woolf was no stranger to, as her literary collection for example featured a reprint of Charles William Day's *Hints on Etiquette* (1834), a manual much discussed in this thesis for its significance in shaping the discourse of etiquette manuals.⁷⁴⁶

Moreover, the language of the parts of the novel concerning Clarissa seem to assimilate themselves to the features of the ideal hostess. Still in 1902, in a 'revised' edition of *Etiquette for Women: A Book of Modern Modes and Manners By One of the Aristocracy*, the 'popular hostess' is portrayed as the crucial player in a household, something close to an anthropological observer, who 'studies' her guests and 'finds out, not by point-blank questioning, but tactfully, each guest's tastes, and manages to minister to them and remember them'.⁷⁴⁷ Clarissa's thoughts indeed frequently revolve around (or even absorb) the thoughts of those around her and only rarely focuses entirely on herself. To Emily Blair, Woolf's narrative technique presents an important shift in terms of narrative voice, arguing that is in fact 'this equivocation [which] allows Woolf to shift from the masculine writer who relies on the materiality of the house in order to "proceed to intimacy" to a feminine hostess who "expertly gets into touch with her unknown guest" and stimulates the imagination'.⁷⁴⁸

Even though manuals such as *Etiquette for Women*, republished in 1902, claimed to have been adapted to 'modern standards of life', in actuality, the rules on the pages of these manuals

⁷⁴⁵ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 10.

⁷⁴⁶ See: *The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-Title Catalog*, ed. by Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic (Pullman, Wash: Washington State University Press, 2003).

⁷⁴⁷ *Etiquette for Women: A Book of Modern Modes and Manners By One of the Aristocracy* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., 1902), p. 67.

⁷⁴⁸ Emily Blair, *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007) p. 50.

had barely changed and were very much the same in narrative and content as they had been decades earlier.⁷⁴⁹ Mrs Dalloway is similarly supposed to be set in a modernised society, yet at the same time, her behaviour or her role as hostess still seem to be paramount. Clarissa's friend Peter is the only one to think about 'carry[ing] off Clarissa, to save her from the Hughs and the Dalloways and all the other "perfect gentlemen" who would "stifle her soul", make a mere hostess of her'.⁷⁵⁰ Perhaps looking for stability after the mayhem of the war, or perhaps wanting to keep the aristocracy at the height of society, even the renowned psychiatrist Sir William Bradshaw gives Lady Bradshaw as a woman to aspire to, who 'embroidered, knitted, spent four out of seven at home with her son' and also in other aspects fit the archetypal Victorian ideal perfectly.⁷⁵¹

In trying to 'criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense', as Woolf says in her diary of her purpose in writing *Mrs Dalloway*, she shows that etiquette was still very much part of society.⁷⁵² Clarissa is still pressured to adhere to the expected standards that come with 'being Mrs Richard Dalloway', which demonstrates that even though the kinds of ideals etiquette manuals promoted seem somewhat out of place in post-war London, the far-reaching influence of etiquette manuals and that etiquette managed to survive long after Victoria.⁷⁵³

As the Dalloway example suggests, while the output of etiquette manual publications declined in the late nineteenth-century, their influence in print culture was lasting. Thus, Emily Post would state in her manual *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, published in 1922, that: "There is not a single thing that we do, or say, or choose, or use, or even think that does not follow (or break) one of the exactions of taste, or tact, or ethics, or good manners, or etiquette".⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴⁹ *Etiquette for Women* (1902), p. iii.

⁷⁵⁰ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 82.

⁷⁵¹ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 45.

⁷⁵² Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1978) p. 57.

⁷⁵³ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 14.

⁷⁵⁴ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, 9th edition (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1955), p. 8.

Etiquette as a concept as well as literary phenomenon seems to have a long afterlife beyond the Victorian period, even considered relevant to audiences in the present day. In fact, Charles William Day's *Hints on Etiquette* (1834), the etiquette manual this thesis has identified as the first one in the canon, is still in print, with the most recent publication from 2005 noting that 'this guide [...] still has valuable lessons for the contemporary reader'.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁵ *Hints on Etiquette: and the Uses of Society* (Chichester, Summerdale, 2005), p. 3.

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