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FROM *CIVILITAS* TO CIVILITY: CODES OF MANNERS IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

By John Gillingham

ABSTRACT. Argues that to see the contrasts between late medieval 'courtesy books' and early modern manuals of manners as markers of changing ideals of social conduct in England is an interpretation too narrowly based on works written in English. Examination of Latin and Anglo-Norman literature shows that the ideal of the urbane gentleman can be traced back at least as far as the most comprehensive of all courtesy books, the twelfth-century *Liber Urbani* of Daniel of Beccles, and was itself underpinned by the commonplace secular morality of the much older *Distichs of Cato*.

EVER since the pioneering cultural history of Norbert Elias, the emergence of the words 'civil' and 'civility' in Western European languages, English included, in senses pertaining to refined and polished manners, has been taken to mark a highly significant shift between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in the styles and tastes of the upper classes, a shift neatly encapsulated in the title of Anna Bryson's book: *From Courtesy to Civility*.[1] It remains generally agreed that the concept of civility developed first in Italy, where its association with 'city' meant a great deal, and that as it spread throughout Europe, so the terms 'civil' and 'civility' changed their meanings, gradually displacing 'courteous' and 'courtesy' as the fashionable terms denoting approved conduct.[2] Bryson, while acknowledging that

> nothing in the courtesy literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries supports the notion that 'civility' represents a bourgeois

[1] A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

[2] M. B. Becker, *Civility and Society in Western Europe, 1300–1600* (Bloomington, IN, 1988); P. Burke, 'A Civil Tongue: Language and Politeness in Early Modern Europe', in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. P. Burke, B. Harrison and P. Slack (Oxford, 2000), 36; E. Cameron, '"Civilized Religion" from Renaissance to Reformation and Counter-Reformation', in *ibid.*, 50.

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> standard of behaviour at odds with the previously established aristocratic ideals of 'courtesy'

none the less elaborates Elias's view that the new term meant a new concept, a new 'way of seeing' social conduct and social life.[3]

Central to this view is the contrast commonly drawn between medieval 'courtesy books' and early modern manuals of manners. In support of this contrast Bryson summarises the style and contents of the courtesy books composed in English in fifteenth-century England. They

> are all cast in a simple easily memorizable verse form, running to a few hundred lines and addressed to young pages within the noble household. Although interspersed with moral exhortations to piety and humility, the precepts are largely practical and technical. The overwhelming preoccupation of their authors is with table manners, ... with the formal dinner as the central ritual of the household, one which dramatized both its internal hierarchy and its relation to the outside world in the provision of hospitality.[4]

Whereas medieval courtesy had emphasised 'rituals of lordship and service within the noble household', the equivalent early modern works, beginning, just as Elias proclaimed, with Erasmus's *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium*, are said to present '"civil" behaviour as a technique for the representation of personal virtue within a broader "civil" community'. Civility in manners becomes 'an extensive practical science of sociability' rather than 'a set of rules for use in a limited range of situations'.[5] In this paper in an attempt to compare like with like I shall for the most

[3] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 60, 276–7. Many of the contributions to *Civil Histories*, ed. Burke, Harrison and Slack, reveal the influence of the 1984 DPhil thesis on which this fine book is based. Although I tend here to cite it only when I disagree, I could not have written this paper without it, and I have, in any case, only done what she herself had foreseen in anticipating that 'continuing research on the value of "courtesy" in medieval society would almost certainly modify the contrast between the two periods which is posited in this book', *ibid.*, 277–8.

[4] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 27. What goes unmentioned in the 'practical and technical' didactic literature, but is clear – at least in the minds of the male authors of romances – is the impact made by the elegant performance of table service by a handsome and well-dressed young man: 'no lady seeing him was not deeply affected and troubled by the pangs of love ... did not want to hold him softly to her under an ermine coverlet', 'The Romance of Horn', in *The Birth of Romance*, trans. J. Weiss (1992), 11.

[5] Although the contrast is said to lie 'less in the context of particular rules than in the assumptions and preoccupations which seem to govern the range and form of codification', and in a new conception of what manners were *for*', Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 60, 68–71, 107, 277. In working out the contrast Bryson accepts Ariès's notion that a clear concept of childhood first emerged in the sixteenth century (*ibid.*, 67), an idea explicitly rejected by recent historians of medieval children, S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (1990), 1–6; N. Orme, *Medieval Children* (2001), 3–10.

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part confine myself to looking at medieval didactic expositions of gentlemanly manners in the light of what I have learned, thanks very largely to Anna Bryson's guidance, about early modern expositions. (This means that I shall leave to one side the notion that during the sixteenth century the term 'civility' began to take on some of the connotations of 'civilisation' as the opposition between the 'civil' and the 'barbaric' implicit in classical writings was allegedly developed in response to the challenge presented by the discovery of the 'savage' inhabitants of the New World, and then applied in a contrast between English civility and Irish barbarity.[6] I do so since I have elsewhere discussed the notion of a civilising process in medieval and early modern England.[7])

To base the contrast between medieval and early modern on works written in English is understandable since nearly all modern studies of medieval conduct books focus on them, and are written by scholars specialising in English literature,[8] but it is not without its dangers. The late development of English as a language of elite culture and politics in post-1066 England means that concepts existed and were expressed in Latin and in French (Anglo-Norman) long before the equivalent English words were coined. So far as extant writings go, courtesy literature is a genre which emerged in the twelfth century – together with such other new arrivals relevant to the self-perception of the English elite as heraldry, tournaments, vernacular romances (in which women were given central roles), non-monastic schools and universities. Twelfth-century courtesy literature was written in Latin, part of an elite culture common to all Western Europe.[9] From the thirteenth century onwards we have courtesy poems written in Anglo-Norman, often used

[6] 'One of the meanings of "civil" was the opposite of "wild", "rude" or "barbarous"', *Civil Histories*, ed. Burke, Harrison and Slack, v. See Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 51–2, 72–4, 107, 277, and D. Knox, '*Disciplina*: The Monastic and Clerical Origins of European Civility', in *Renaissance Society and Culture*, ed. J. Monfasini and R. G. Musto (New York, 1991), 129–32.

[7] J. Gillingham, 'Civilising the English? The English Histories of William of Malmesbury and David Hume', *Historical Research*, 74 (2001), 17–43. It is clear that the contrast between English civility and Irish barbarism took root in the twelfth century.

[8] For a recent example see all the essays on England in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. K. Ashley and R. L. A. Clark (Minneapolis, 2001). A helpful guide to the ways in which a number of genres in both vernaculars deal with the subject is D. Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England* (1998).

[9] By far the most helpful study of the genre in English is J. W. Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain Poet* (Woodbridge, 1985). Even Nicholls, however, decided that table manners were so central to medieval courtesy literature that he omitted one twelfth-century poem, the *Facetus: moribus et vita*, from his list of poems (pp. 146, 181–2) on the grounds that it did not deal with the 'kind of material associated with courtesy books' – and this despite the fact that it began 'Whoever wishes to be courtly (*facetus*) in manners and life, let him read me.' For text and translation see A. G. Elliott, 'The *Facetus*: Or, The Art of Courtly Living', *Allegorica*, 2 (1977), 27–57.

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as texts in the acquisition of the language of polite society. Indeed one of the attractions of the word *courteis* was that it could be rhymed with *franceis*, as in these lines from the thirteenth-century *Urbain* (also known as *Urbain le Courtois*): 'Be debonair and courteise, and see that you know how to speak franceys', which the poet immediately identifies as the language 'de gentil home'.[10] There are thirteenth-century examples of the Anglicised form 'gentleman' and although the OED cites Chaucer as the earliest author to use the word 'gentleman' in the sense of 'a man of gentle birth who possessed the fine feelings appropriate to his rank', the notion that men of rank should be more refined than those of lower status is a much older one. So although it is arguable that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the words *gentilhommes* and 'gentlemen' may have meant primarily 'men of gentle birth entitled to bear arms' there is no doubt that this status also implied a claim to superior culture – a culture common to the whole 'gentle' class, from princes and earls downwards.[11]

Two of the five extant Anglo-Norman texts bear a close resemblance to fifteenth-century English courtesy books.[12] The other three, including *Urbain*, much the most widely disseminated of the five, are not so preoccupied with table manners or service at table. Rather they are general treatises on the manners and morals thought appropriate to a social elite, 'traités de savoir-vivre', to use the apt term used by modern French students of the genre.[13] They contain plenty of good advice for budding gentlemen such as: do not boast about your mistress. If you do, you will find that all the decent women (*tutes les gentils femmes del monde*) will avoid you. Or: when choosing a wife, do not choose one either for her beauty or for her learning.[14] In early modern England the vocabulary of politeness was dominated by words imported from Italy and France; in twelfth-and thirteenth-century England courtesy literature was composed in Latin and French. Copies of these Latin

[10] H. Rosamund Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman Books of Courtesy and Nurture', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 44 (1929), 399, 410. See also such lines as 'Se tu veulx estre bien courtois / Regardes ces reigles en françoys', F. J. Furnivall, *Manners and Meals in Olden Time* (1868), II, 3, 8, 16.

[11] At all levels aristocracy and gentry had in common 'a distinctive life-style and a self-conscious adherence to a set of courtly and chivalric values', C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), 19. Hence the genre of Mirrors of Princes aimed at a much wider audience than princes. Cf. D. A. L. Morgan, 'The Individual Style of the English Gentleman', in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Jones (1986), and P. Coss, *The Knight in Medieval England 1000–1400* (Stroud, 1993), ch. 5.

[12] They are *L'Apprise de Nurture* and the *Petit Traitise*, both known only in a single fifteenth-century manuscript, Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman Books', 430–1, 451.

[13] *Pour une histoire des traités de savoir-vivre en Europe*, ed. A. Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand, 1994).

[14] Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman Books', 404, 413.

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and Anglo-Norman works continued to circulate during the fifteenth century, so even for fifteenth-century England it is misleading to focus exclusively on courtesy literature written in English. Moreover, if the form and approach of Erasmus's *De Civilitate* 'suggest not so much the training of boys in noble households but the environment of the school',[15] it follows that in the first instance we should compare it with medieval works from a similar environment. Whereas the works written in Anglo-Norman and in English seem to have been widely used in households, both aristocratic and mercantile, the Latin poems were primarily for use in schools.[16] In any case, before claiming, as many do, that the *De Civilitate* of Erasmus marked a new departure, it would seem sensible to compare Erasmus's Latin not only with fifteenth-century courtesy literature in a vernacular, as many do, but also with earlier literature in Latin.

One of the shortest and most widely diffused twelfth-century courtesy poems in Latin was the text now known as *Facetus*.[17] It was loosely constructed in the gnomic form of its model, the third-century *Distichs of Cato*, of which it claimed to be a supplement (and on which see below p. 279). *Facetus* had become a set text in English schools by 1300 and remained in use until swept out by the humanists in the 1520s.[18] In addition to giving advice on table manners, it dealt with conversation, dress, deportment and social relationships. Such universally cynical advice as: 'whatever you do, do not tell your secrets to your wife', went hand in hand with 'He who speaks badly of women is a boor (*rusticus*), for truly we are all born of women.'[19] *Rusticus* and *rusticitas* are key words in courtesy literature, indicative of its claims to teach socially superior behaviour.[20] Another extremely popular work, surviving in

[15] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 29.

[16] Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 73–4. Naturally the 'bourgeois' wished to be as well mannered as the 'noble', and this was a genre that was read by both. On the urban household's reading matter see F. Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 66–86, especially 77 for the point that it was more acceptable for a businessman's son to try to be Sir Gawain than it was for his daughter to pass herself off as a lady.

[17] Or *Facetus: cum nihil utilius* to distinguish it from another *Facetus* poem (see above n. 9). Edited in J. Morawski, *Le facet en françoys* (Poznan, 1923). In one MS it is called *liber facetie*, in another *liber urbani*, Nicholls *Matter of Courtesy*, 10 n. 10.

[18] N. Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (1973), 104–6; Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 62–5, Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 26–7. For the fifty-eight early printed editions see S. Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste and Medieval Courtesy-Books', *Vivarium*, 5 (1967), 51.

[19] Morawski, *Le facet*, 11. 45 bis, 73–4. Book Two of the mid-fifteenth century Sloane Courtesy Book makes extensive use of the *Facetus*, Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 166–7.

[20] In the 1240s John of Garland placed the *Septem Rusticitates* in opposition to the *Septem Curialitates*, *Morale Scolarium of John of Garland*, ed. L. J. Paetow (Berkeley, 1927), chs. 20 and 21. Chapter 9 on table manners entitled *De curialitatibus* begins by saying 'I defend courtliness and criticize rusticity.' See also Gieben, 'Grosseteste', 54–5, for the seven *rusticitates* opposed to the seven *urbanitates*.

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many English manuscripts from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, was the *Disciplina clericalis* written by Petrus Alfonsi, a converted Spanish Jew deeply versed in Arabic literature.[21] This includes a description of the qualities of the ideal counsellor. He should be well instructed in the seven liberal arts, in the seven rules of good conduct (do not eat or drink too much, do not harm anyone, lie to anyone, be dissolute or envious, keep bad company or conversation – all very conventional); and in the seven knightly skills (*probitates*): riding, swimming, archery, combat, falconry, chess and song-writing. It also contains sections on how to reply to invitations, how to behave as a guest and on good table manners, including 'do not grab the tastiest morsels, or you will be reproached for your *rusticitas*'.[22] Petrus Alfonsi practised medicine at Henry I's court[23] – a court which was certainly perceived as a school of good manners by those close to it. One of the nobles brought up there became King David I of Scotland and was congratulated by William of Malmesbury for his policy of offering tax rebates to any Scotsmen who would learn 'to live in a more civilised style, dress with more elegance and eat with more refinement'. David did this, in William's view, because 'the rust of his native barbarism had been polished away by his upbringing among us'.[24]

The most substantial courtesy poem in any language is the work usually known as *Urbanus Magnus* – although *Liber Urbani*, translated by Robert Bartlett as 'The Book of the Civilized Man', is the more accurate title. On palaeographical grounds the bulk of the treatise can be dated to the twelfth century. Its author was an Englishman, Daniel of Beccles, who hoped to attract the attention of 'Old King Henry' – probably Henry II (though Henry I has also been suggested).[25] It takes the form, characteristic of both medieval and early modern courtesy literature, of a father's advice to his son, but closes with lines indicating that Daniel hoped to have female as well as male readers, laymen as well as clerks.[26] It has some specifically English features, notably mentions of 'Was hail' and 'drinc hail' as traditional toasts.[27] In the full

[21] J. Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers* (Gainesville, 1993), Appendix 3, for a list of manuscripts.

[22] Cc. 4 and 26, in *The 'Disciplina Clericalis' of Petrus Alfonsi*, ed. E. Hermes, (1977) 114–15, 150–1.

[23] C. Burnett, 'The Works of Petrus Alfonsi', *Medium Aevum*, 66 (1997), 44.

[24] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, I, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), c. 400.

[25] *Urbanus Magnus Danielis Becclesiensis*, ed. J. G. Smyly (Dublin, 1939). It ends 'Explicit liber Urbani Danielis Becclesiensis', after stating that it was 'Old King Henry' who first gave this teaching to the uncourtly (*illepidis*). It has become conventional to add the word *magnus* to its title to distinguish it from other poems called *Urbanus*.

[26] *Urbanus*, ll. 2834–5.

[27] *Urbanus*, ll. 944, 1073.

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version it comprises 2,839 lines of Latin verse, roughly ten times longer than *Facetus: cum nihil utilius*. Although in very general terms its importance was recognised earlier, its contents remained unexploited until Bartlett gave it half a dozen pages in his volume in the New Oxford History of England.[28] It is a difficult work to use, inadequately edited, so episodic as to be a jumble, full of digressions, with wild swings of subject matter and tone which make the (probably) often humorous or ironic intentions of the author (or even authors) hard to assess.[29] Even so, it is clearly dangerous to generalise about the characteristics of medieval courtesy literature while neglecting – as medievalists did until very recently – precisely that work which Nicholls described as 'the most comprehensive courtesy poem in any language, covering every aspect of life'. And all the more so since, as Nicholls himself showed, it had a considerable influence on later works in the genre.[30]

Daniel's book begins: 'Reader, read and re-read me if you wish to be adorned with good manners, if you wish to be respected and to lead a civilised life (*urbanam ducere vitam*) as a noble householder (*nobilis heros*).' A dozen lines later it uses the phrase which sums up one of its main themes: elegance of manners (*gracia morum*).[31] There follow some 200 lines on how to behave in church, but the poem's ethos was far from being religious. It ends with over 300 lines of advice on how to live a long, healthy and happy life, on what to drink and eat, with some recipes thrown in, on when to take baths, how much exercise to take, how often to have sex and so on. Moderation in all things, of course, seasonally adjusted. In summer cut back on both hot baths and sex.

[28] R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075–1225* (Oxford, 2000), 579, 582–8. There are some useful comments in T. Zotz, 'Urbanitas: Zur Bedeutung und Funktion einer antiken Wertvorstellung innerhalb der höfischen Kultur des hohen Mittelalters', in *Curialitas: Studien zu Grundfragen der höfischritterlichen Kultur*, ed. J. Fleckenstein (Göttingen, 1990), an article to which I am much indebted.

[29] How, for example, should we read the warning against striking an enemy while he is squatting to defecate? *Urbanus*, ll. 1094–7.

[30] Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, 162–6, 185. The subject of Daniel's influence on subsequent works, particularly in Anglo-Norman, is one which has been taken further by Frédérique Lachaud in 'Littérature de civilité et "processus de civilisation" à la fin du XIIe siècle: le cas anglais d'après l'*Urbanus magnus*', in *Les échanges culturels: actes du congrès des médiévistes français, Boulogne-sur-Mer 2001*, ed. D. Courtemanche and A.-M. Helvétius (Paris, 2002). I owe much to Frédérique Lachaud's kindness in letting me see in advance of publication both this and another paper, 'L'enseignement des bonnes manières en milieu de cour en Angleterre d'après l'*Urbanus magnus* attribué à Daniel de Beccles', to be published in *Erziehung und Bildung am Hofe. 7. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission in Celle*, ed. H. Kruse and W. Paravicini (Sigmaringen, 2002).

[31] *Urbanus*, ll. 1–2, 14. For other examples of the phrase *gracia morum* see C. S. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness – Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia, 1985), 33, 95–6, 140.

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Cheerful songs will keep you in a good mood. Cultivate entertaining conversation, avoid quarrels, getting some new clothes is often a good idea.[32] There is certainly a good deal on table manners and on the duties of those servants who perform honourable services, both political services as envoys and personal services, at table, in the bedchamber and in the privy, the kinds of services which, well done, led either to promotion or to love and marriage.[33] There is advice on how to eat and drink politely, both in the company of social superiors and inferiors.[34] One of its main themes was the importance of control of the body, the kind of subject dear to Norbert Elias.[35] When, where and how you can urinate, defecate, spit, belch and fart politely; for example, when you belch remember to look up at the ceiling; guidelines such as that only the head of household was entitled to urinate in the hall.[36] There are nearly 400 lines on household management: house and garden, entertaining, sleeping arrangements, children, guests, the endless worries of the house of household, the servant problem.[37] You are advised to build a beautiful house with ornate chambers and decent privies, situated so as to keep unpleasant smells to a minimum.[38] At times Daniel was thinking, as Bartlett puts it, 'of the country gentleman who wishes to make it clear that the stress is on the "gentleman" rather than the "country"'.[39] Time and again Daniel condemns certain actions

[32] *Urbanus*, ll. 2524–833. A version of this section of the poem was printed in Furnivall, *Manners and Meals*, II, 34–57. The text is close to the well-known Salernitan Regimen of Health (itself addressed to a king of the English), so dating this section of *Urbanus* to either the twelfth or thirteenth century, depends partly upon what view is taken of the difficult question of the chronology of composition of the Regimen, a later version of which Sir John Harrington translated as *The School of Salernum*. See P. W. Cummins, 'A Salernitan Regimen of Health', *Allegorica*, I (1976) 78–81.

[33] *Urbanus*, ll. 1116–220, 1266–92, 1326–39. Technical precepts were intermixed with advice on how to make the best of the time (possibly a lifetime) spent in service.

[34] Including the injunction not to attack one's food *more canino*, *Urbanus*, ll. 1398–9. I am not inclined to make much of the greater frequency with which Erasmus compared behaviour of which he disapproved with that of animals. But for a different view see Bryson, *Courtesy to Chivalry*, 278, and Knox, '*Disciplina*', 107, 117, 126. In the short fifteenth-century poem, *Ut te geras ad mensam*, you were advised not to scratch yourself like a mole, Furnivall, *Meals and manners*, II, 26.

[35] Elias believed that 'courtois verses say little on this subject', *Civilizing Process*, 110, but he did not know of Daniel's work.

[36] *Urbanus*, ll. 1047–9, 1083–103.

[37] *Urbanus*, ll. 2144–524.

[38] *Urbanus*, ll. 1290–2, 2203–5. Cf. T. A. Heslop, 'Orford Castle: Nostalgia and Sophisticated Living', *Architectural History*, 34 (1991), 44, for the careful attention paid to the ventilation of privies in a twelfth-century castle.

[39] In this section 'a major preoccupation is the continuous and difficult attempt to segregate the working life of an agrarian community from the civilized enclave of the semi-public household space', Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 587–8.

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as boorish.[40] When plied with questions, 'reply with courteous words (*verba faceta*) as befits a nobleman'.[41] But this gentleman is not above efficient estate management. On the contrary, Daniel quotes Ovid – pauperis est numerare pecus – only to disagree. It is not low class to count your flocks, to keep a sharp eye on your property, to work to improve the yields of fields and livestock. If you do this you can afford to be generous.[42]

If we say that everything I have mentioned so far is focused on the household, it still only comes to about a half of the whole poem. There are additionally some 400 lines on the duties and problems of a wide range of vocations: judges, officials, advocates, knights, teachers, students, citizens, merchants, sailors, singers, thieves, doctors, religious, princes. It is an awkward text for those who think that the life of the secular elite was dominated by war since there are only a dozen lines on soldierly activity (less than 0.5 per cent of the total number). As a genre, indeed, courtesy books of all periods have little to say about war. There are ten times as many lines on the role of the judge, grumbling about lawyers and lamenting the corruption of the times. There are almost three times as many lines on the temptations and problems of holding administrative office. There are at least 670 lines of general advice, practical wisdom of the *Distichs of Cato* type, on such matters as how to hold a conversation, how to deal with friends and with enemies, how to choose a patron or a wife.[43] There are more than 250 lines on how to deal with women. If your wife is unfaithful (and she is bound to be, given female sexual appetites which make it virtually impossible for them to say no to any well-endowed male), pretend not to notice. 'It is better to conceal your shame as a husband than disclose the evil that brings a blush to your face and grief to your heart.'[44] If your lord's wife makes a pass at you, pretend to be ill – and don't say a word to her husband.[45] As is commonplace in courtesy literature we hear not only about controlling emotions, but also about concealing

[40] E.g. *Urbanus*, ll. 888, 1047–9, 1105, 1107–9.

[41] *Ibid.*, ll. 1414–15.

[42] *Urbanus*, ll. 2182–200. In lines 1141–6 Daniel refers to the work of clerks in keeping accounts and drawing up legal documents. The thirteenth-century 'managerial revolution' in the administration of manors should be borne in mind here. See S. L. Waugh, 'Tenure to Contract: Lordship and Clientage in Thirteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review* 101 (1986), 811–39.

[43] In conversation comport yourself *more Catonis*, *Urbanus*, l. 102.

[44] *Urbanus*, ll. 2002–12. Nor indeed should you either beat or desert your wife, 1997–9, 2013–26. There is also some succinct advice on best practice when with a prostitute, 2103–6. It seems likely that much of what Daniel wrote about sexual relations between the sexes was intended to amuse. See Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 586–7.

[45] *Urbanus*, ll. 1896–922.

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them.[46] The *Liber Urbani* gives advice on proper and urbane conduct in what has been called 'a dizzying range of situations'.[47] Not just in the country, but also in towns.[48] Daniel emphasises the importance of *pax in urbe*, of living at peace with neighbours and fellow-citizens (*concives*).[49] We do not have to wait until the sixteenth century to find a courtesy manual with 'ambitious claims to define good behaviour at all times and in all companies'.[50]

The fact that Daniel of Beccles was thinking of a gentleman's life-style and that he wrote in quite difficult Latin verse does, of course, raise unanswerable questions about lay literacy. Michael Clanchy points out that 'ideally ladies (and gentlemen) in twelfth-and thirteenth-century England should be able to read in three languages at least: Latin, French and English'. By 1300 the ability to read some Latin was, he suggests, 'common among the gentry' since 'bureaucratic demands in Latin were sufficiently common to make it useful to any landowner to be able to understand them'. Moreover, 'literacy for recreation or self-improvement' was increasing as more was being written down in the vernacular languages.[51] What is clear is that heroes of romance could read. For example in the late twelfth-century romance *Ipomedon* written by Hue of Roteland, the young hero had a tutor who was 'mult bien lettrez' and who ensured that he was literate too.[52] In the later English versions of *Ipomedon* the interest in the hero's upbringing and education was retained and further developed.[53] It is noticeable how much space Caxton's courtesy book gives to the authors whose works should be read: Gower, Chaucer, Lydgate, Hoccleve.[54]

Throughout the *Liber Urbani* a principal theme is restraint. Watch

[46] And not just as in the commonplace advice to hide grief under a smile, but also in the recommendation that you pretend not to hear unkind words, *ibid.*, 398–9, 820–4, 858–62. According to the twelfth-century *Historia Gaufridi ducis*, Henry II's father, Geoffrey le Bel, was praised because 'he bore injuries patiently and clemently; if he heard abuse heaped on him he pretended not to hear it', *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, ed. L. Halphen and R. Poupardin (Paris, 1913), 177.

[47] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 582.

[48] *Urbanus*, ll. 1354–7, 1748–56.

[49] *Urbanus*, ll. 449–73. In this short passage the word *concives* is used five times. See also p. 281. It is not easy to see how later authors could make a clearer connection than Daniel does 'between good manners and other virtues perceived to promote social harmony and peace in the community', Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 70.

[50] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 68.

[51] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1993), 194, 198–200, 246–7.

[52] *Ipomedon: Poème de Hue de Rotelande*, ed. A. J. Holden (Paris, 1979), ll. 203–7, 325–6, 1160.

[53] C. Meale, 'The Middle English Romance of *Ipomedon*: A Late Medieval "Mirror" for Princes and Merchants', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 10 (1984), 136–83, esp. 150–6.

[54] *Caxton's Book of Courtesy*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (1868), 32–7. In a poem of just 532 lines, fifty-six are on the subject of reading these four authors.

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your tongue, say little, avoid giving offence, make sure your words are cheerful, courteous and polished, *iocosa, faceta, polita.*[55] Do not lose your temper, for example when losing at chess; do not mock, do not threaten, do not react violently to threats, do not take precipitate revenge, do not harbour resentments.[56] Do not always insist on your rights – for if you do, you will have few friends. Love moderation if you wish to be courtly (*Dilige temperiem, si diligis esse facetus*).[57] If this theme is treated only in passing in fifteenth-century English courtesy works, it is not because it was regarded as of little importance in an essentially violent, honour-based society, but because it was a familiar commonplace. As with the *Distichs of Cato*, much of it was proverbial.[58] The most basic rule throughout courtesy literature in all languages is: do not do or say anything that might offend or humiliate others.[59] If you do, you will pay in the end. There is no room here for the notion, central to Elias's interpretation of courtesy and civility, that Renaissance civility reflected 'a new tendency to assert a general rule of consideration towards one's fellows'.[60] According to Erasmus, the essence of civility (*maxima civilitatis pars*; in Robert Whittinton's translation 'the chief part of gentyll maner') was 'gentilly' to pardon the shortcomings of others; if you advised them where they went wrong, it was good manners to do so in private and 'with gentill fashion' (*solum ac blande monere civilitatis est*).[61] Elias's comment on this passage was that compared with earlier courtly literature 'the change of tone, the increased sensitivity, the heightened human observation and the sharper understanding of what is going on in

[55] *Urbanus*, ll. 664–5, 847–8; cf. 'Le bel teisir est curteisie', *Ipomedon*, l. 2630.

[56] *Urbanus*, ll. 398–9, 642–87, 833–6, 845–6. Cf. 'Vos ne prendrez la venjaunce, De espeye ne de launce, Mais autrement purrez conquere, Amendement par lay de terre, Ne seez pas trope hastif, Ceo vous prie, moun chere fiz', in *Urbain le Courtois*, Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman Books', 404.

[57] *Urbanus*, ll. 845, 923.

[58] Extracts from the *Liber Urbani* in the earliest manuscript (Oxford, Bodley, Rawlinson, C.552) are headed *Proverbia Urbani*, Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 162.

[59] In 'How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter' she was advised to be courteous to all; for example, no matter how unacceptable a proposal of marriage might be, not to pour scorn on the man who made it, Furnivall, *Manners and Meals*, I, 37. For a few other examples of this ubiquitous theme see *ibid.*, I, 15, 55–6, II, 28, 30. The young men at Edward IV's court were to be taught 'temperate behaving and patience', A. R. Myers, *The Household of Edward IV* (Manchester, 1959), 126–7.

[60] Bryson, *Courtesy to Chivalry*, 110. For example Elias argued that a comment on farting made by Erasmus showed 'the old unconcern in referrring to bodily functions that was characteristic of medieval people, but enriched by observation, by consideration of what others *might* think', *Civilizing Process*, 66. But Daniel's views on this subject, including his disapproval of farting noisily for fun, were equally based on what others might think, *Urbanus*, ll. 1090–103.

[61] Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium* in *Opera Omnia* (Leiden, 1540), tom. I, 870; Robert Whittinton's bi-lingual version in the 1554 edition, sig. Diii–iv; modern English in *Complete Works of Erasmus*, XXV, ed. J. K. Sowards (Toronto, 1985), 289.

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others are unmistakable. This sensitivity showed how little Erasmus identified with the code of the courtly upper class of the time.'[62] But in his *Liber Urbani* Daniel wrote, 'do not ridicule your fellow if he makes a mistake; if you know the right way, correct him politely (*urbane*)'. According to the Anglo-Norman *L'Apprise de Nurture* 'Reprove no one in public, but wait to say your piece until you are in a place where you can say it to him well and privately.'[63] In essence the ideas in *De Civilitate* were medieval commonplaces.[64] What can, however, be said is that with Erasmus 'what oft was thought, was ne'er so well expressed' – had never before been so effectively put into classicising schoolbook Latin.[65]

As Stephen Jaeger has emphasised, gentleness of spirit (*mansuetudo*) came to be 'one of the dominant themes of medieval ethical writings'. This was, in his view, because patience, affability and gentleness, whether natural or acquired, were politically astute strategies if one were to survive in the competitive hothouse of court society. He argued that clerics attached to royal and princely courts in the tenth and eleventh centuries were the first to see the value of this quality, and claimed that as this idea filtered through the ranks of the lay nobility, it marked 'nothing less than the civilising of Europe'.[66] Certainly this gentleness was, according to the eleventh-century author of the *Life of King Edward*, one of the qualities possessed in abundance by Earls Godwin and Harold Godwinsson and which helped to explain their dominance of the English court.[67] In view of all this – the entirely

[62] Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 64–5.

[63] *Urbanus*, ll. 159–60; Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman', 437.

[64] C. Roussel, 'Le legs de la Rose: modèles et préceptes de la sociabilité médiévale', in *Pour une histoire des traités de savoir-vivre en Europe*, ed. A. Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 1. Erasmus was 'a monk versed in medieval tradition' whose achievement was to give 'coherence and orderly arrangement to the medieval body of precepts', M. T. Brentano, *Relationship of the Latin* Facetus *Literature to the Medieval English Courtesy Poems* (Lawrence, KA, 1935), 105–6. To this I would add that he seasoned his commonplaces with an occasional phrase in Greek.

[65] Its success was due to 'the eminence of its author, the elegance and pedagogic utility of its language (Renaissance Latin adapted to the level of a well-schooled boy of ten), and its systematic treatment', M. Ingram, 'Sexual Manners: The Other Face of Civility in Early Modern England', in *Civil Histories*, ed. Burke, Harrison and Slack, 92.

[66] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 36–7. I am more inclined to believe that laymen and secular-minded clerics always shared values which clerics then first expressed in written form.

[67] Godwin 'took infinite trouble in all his dealings with inferiors and among equals to cultivate the gentleness (*mansuetudo*) he had learnt from boyhood', *Life of King Edward*, ed. F. Barlow (2nd edn, Oxford, 1992), 8–9. Cf. J. Gillingham, 'Thegns and Knights in Eleventh-Century England: Who Was Then the Gentleman?', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 5 (1995), repr. in *idem*, *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 2000), 163–85, esp. 180–2. In Gerald de Barri's *De instructione principis*, *mansuetudo* is the first virtue a ruler needed, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera Omnia*, VIII, ed. G. F. Warner (Rolls Series, 1891), 9–12.

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conventional emphasis upon restraint and gentleness, upon consideration for others – it is impossible to take seriously the notion that Obadiah Walker was both summing up 'the new ideal of civility' and rejecting an 'earlier honour-based system', when he asserted in the 1670s that civility consisted of doing kindness to others, and of neither committing honour-threatening acts against others nor resenting or over-reacting to threats or insults by others.[68] Walker himself, for whom the rules of civility were 'founded upon Prudence and Charity', remarked that many of them 'seem plain and obvious, such as are fit to be insinuated into the practice of children'.[69]

Indeed the basic ideas of the prudential morality underlying courtesy can already be found in a work which was read by all those children who learned Latin, at least from the ninth century and very probably from much earlier: the *Distichs of Cato*. Composed in the third century AD by an unknown author, this was a work of practical morality in the Stoic tradition which taught that cultivation of certain personal qualities would win public esteem.[70] With the one exception of one *Distich* (III.19),[71] the work lacks the distinctive vocabulary of courtesy; hence it has never been classified as a courtesy book. But countless echoes of it in courtesy literature make its influence plain. The sententious practical wisdom contained in the *Distichs* stands in the same relationship to 'courtesy' as do Obadiah Walker's plain and obvious rules to civility.[72] The wisdom of the *Distichs* was that of the worldly and the practical, based on a cynical and calculating view of human motives. The reader, 'if he had followed to the letter the precepts given him, would have cultivated patience, prudence, temperance and fortitude'; in a world in which Fortune was active in the affairs of men, he would have done so out of self-interest, not out of any 'higher' motive. The religious-minded were often troubled by those *Distichs* in which 'Cato', like courtesy books, recommended dissimulation or concealment. None the less it remained well known throughout the

[68] Burke, 'A Civil Tongue', 37.

[69] O. Walker, *Of Education, Especially of Young Gentlemen* (3rd impression, 1677), 219.

[70] The unknown author explained that he had written *maxime ut gloriose viverent et ad honorem contingerent*, T. Hunt, *Le Livre de Catun* (Anglo-Norman Text Society, Plain Texts Series 11, 1994), 9.

[71] Speak modestly and with restraint at dinner parties 'if you wish to be thought well-mannered (*dum vis urbanus haberi*)'. In one of the three Anglo-Norman translations, dated by Tony Hunt to the thirteenth century, it is at this point – and only at this point – that the word *curtais* was used, Hunt, *Livre de Catun*, 34. The word does not occur in the other two Anglo-Norman versions printed in *Maître Elies Überarbeitung der ältesten französischen Übertragung von Ovids Ars Amatoria nebst Elies de Wincestre, eines Anonymus und Everarts Übertragungen der Disticha Catonis*, ed. E. Stengel (Marburg, 1886), 110–45.

[72] Hunt, *Livre de Catun*, 1. It was not a work on *savoir-vivre*, but on *savoir-vivre*'s indispensable moral underpinning, Roussel, 'Le legs de la Rose', 4.

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Middle Ages, 'the first full-length literary piece the student read', was edited by Erasmus and continued to be printed up to c. 1600.[73] One of the paradoxes of a supposedly Christian and clerical medieval culture is that throughout this period the standard primary schoolbook was a pagan and secular one. Its effect was 'to indoctrinate the medieval world with the principles of ancient morality'[74] – the morality of the courtesy book.

If the terms 'civil' and 'civility' contained so little that was new, then what should we make of their introduction?[75] Probably when English schoolboys read *De Civilitate* in Latin (as in bilingual editions such as those of Robert Whittinton in 1532, 1540 and 1554), it may well have been the first time they came across the words *civilis* and *civilitas* – but then that would have been true of any number of Erasmus's words since, as Knox has made abundantly clear, *De Civilitate* was a drill-book for lower forms.[76] In fact the words *civilis* and *civilitas* with the meaning of 'refined' had been commonly used many centuries earlier by English authors who knew their classics: by Bede and Alcuin in the eighth century;[77] by William of Malmesbury,[78] John of Salisbury, Herbert of Bosham and Gerald de Barri in the twelfth.[79] John of Salisbury used 'civil' in senses embracing the aesthetic criterion of good taste, the moral standards of self-restraint and the political values of good lordship. To feed 5,000 with five loaves was the act of a 'most liberal, most civil (*civilissimus*) and most courtly (*facetissimus*) paterfamilias'.[80] In a passage

[73] *Distichs* I.14; I.26; II.7; II.18; III.3; IV.20. See R. Hazelton, 'The Christianization of "Cato"; The *Disticha Catonis* in the Light of Late Medieval Commentaries', *Medieval Studies*, 19 (1957), 157–73.

[74] R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, 1958), 125.

[75] It may be that the connotations of 'ordered political life' contained in the word *civilitas* helped to strengthen the connection 'between good manners and other virtues perceived to promote social harmony and peace in the community'. See n. 49 for this in Daniel of Beccles.

[76] D. Knox, 'Erasmus' *De Civilitate* and the Religious Origins of Civility in Protestant Europe', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 86 (1995), 7–55. According to my count, Erasmus used forms of *(in)civilis* twenty times, *(in)decorum* fifteen times, *(in)urbanus* eleven times, *rusticus* eight times.

[77] Bede describes Oswine of Northumbria as 'pleasant of speech, courteous in manner' (*affatu iucundus et moribus civilis*), *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.14. In *De Rhetorica*, Alcuin advised those who wanted to learn *civiles mores* to read his book; cited in C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), 30–1.

[78] William described Wihtred of Kent as *domi enim civilis* (translated by Mynors as 'civilized at home'), and said that after brutal beginnings Cnut settled down to behave *magna civilitate*, Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, cc. 15, 181.

[79] According to Gerald, the Emperor Augustus, famed for his patronage of architecture and letters, lived *civilissime*, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, VIII, ed. G. F. Warner (Rolls Series, 1891), 51.

[80] H. Liebeschütz, *Medieval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury* (1950), 92–3. John distinguished three types of dinner parties: plebeian, philosophical and the

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on Thomas Becket's care and responsibility for the education of young men in his household, Herbert of Bosham used the word 'civil' no less than seven times, including the claim that although Becket himself did not enjoy the feasting, he pretended to enjoy it *civili dissimulatione*.[81] But in the literary ferment of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries a 'new' Latin was created and *civilis/civilitas* fell out of fashion, although Matthew Paris used it on occasion.[82] Even an author such as John of Garland who defended classical learning preferred to use *urbanitas* and *curialitas*. In consequence later medieval Latin was less classical than twelfth-century Latin, but none the worse for that – except, of course, by the somewhat curious standards of humanists of all ages.[83] While it is true that the words 'civil' and 'civility' gradually became fashionable English usage thanks first to Erasmus[84] and then to Italian and French authors of early modern courtesy books, it is worth noting that sixteenth-century English readers would have come across the Latin forms in some of the historians most familiar to them: Bede, William of Malmesbury and Matthew Paris.[85] Where readers, however, would not have found the words 'civil' and 'civility' in senses relating to refined conduct was in pre-Erasmus Latin courtesy literature. Daniel of Beccles used the word 'civil' but only in an explicitly urban context. The good citizen should act *civili more* and ensure that he did not violate *pacem civilem*.[86]

In medieval Latin courtesy literature the three key adjectives are *urbanus*, *facetus* and *curialis*. In the mid-twelfth-century *Liber Derivationum* of Osbern of Gloucester the words are treated as equivalents, meaning

civil. The plebeian is characterised by its excesses, so far removed from urbanity as to be closer to barbaric vice than to the civil life (*ab omni urbanitate adeo procul est ut barbariei vitiis familiarius sit quam vitae civili*); the philosophical by its sober solemnity; the civil by its moderation, rationality and witty good cheer, *Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri VIII*, ed. C. C. J. Webb (Oxford, 1929), II, 253–7, 279–84.

[81] According to Herbert, Thomas possessed *civilis gratia ... urbana, benigna, socialis*. The well-born youth sent to serve at his court was *tam civiliter eruditam et tam urbane edoctam* thanks to the care (*civilem et domesticam custodiam*) taken by *urbanus novus hic noster paterfamilias*, a man who added *civilitas* to his moderation, *Vita Sancti Thomae*, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, III, ed. J. C. Robertson (Rolls Series, 1877), 227–33. The passage is discussed in Zotz, 'Urbanitas', 428–30, and Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, 297–308. Cf. Erasmus: if someone behaved boorishly at table *civiliter dissimulandum* (*Opera Omnia*, I, 868).

[82] Matthew Paris described Robert Grosseteste as *in mensa refectionis corporalis dapsilis, copiosus et civilis, hilaris et affabilis*, *Chronica Majora*, V, ed. H. R. Luard (Rolls Series, 1880), 407. Southern translated *civilis* here as 'urbane'. According to Aquinas, Orpheus *homines bestiales et solitarios reduceret ad civilitatem*, cited by J. Fisch, 'Zivilisation, Kultur', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. O. Brunner *et al.*, VII (Stuttgart, 1992), 694.

[83] On the legacy of the humanists see Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, 14–16.

[84] Whittinton translated *civilitati morum* as 'civilitie and nurture', sig. Aii (1554 edn).

[85] M. McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1971).

[86] *Urbanus*, ll. 471, 1748.

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in the vernacular *curteis* (according to a Hereford gloss of c. 1200).[87] *Urbanus* is so common that it is unlikely that there was anything distinctively 'urban' in Erasmus's use of the word.[88] The second key word in this genre is *facetus*, which could mean refined and courtly in general, though it was more commonly used of speech, in its Ciceronian sense of witty, as indeed *urbanus* sometimes was too.[89] Surprisingly perhaps, the Latin words closest to the vernacular 'courteous' and 'courtesy', i.e. *curialis* and *curialitas*, are more rarely found in this didactic genre. *Curialitas* was a new word coined in the late eleventh century, after the classical words *curia* and *curialis* (originally referring to the Roman Senate) had recently come back into fashion as synonyms for *aula/palatium*. It is a neologism which reflects both a classicising trend, and an independent development of that trend.[90] *Curialis* and *curialitas* are commonly used in narrative and other literary sources from the twelfth century onwards, including the Parisian *De Amore* of Andrew the Chaplain,[91] but more rarely in didactic courtesy literature. In this genre we find *curialitas* only, I think, in the *Morale Scolarium* written in Paris in the 1240s by an Oxford-educated Englishman, John of Garland, where it is very prominent indeed,[92] and in the fifteenth-century Eton poem *Castrianus*.[93] In Daniel of Beccles, the most comprehensive of all guides to 'elegance of manners' the key words are the Ciceronian ones: *urbanus* and *facetus*.[94]

What these three key words had in common is that, unlike *civilis*, they were sometimes used in pejorative ways. Lanfranc showed where his priorities lay when he wrote that he would rather be *rusticus et idiota* as a good Catholic than *curialis atque facetus* as a heretic.[95] William of St Thierry criticised *urbanitas* which he associated with 'the wisdom of the flesh'; St Bernard wanted priests to avoid talking in a way that others thought of as *facetum* and *urbanum*.[96] 'What shall we say about the many knights who foul their lives by imitating the damnable courtliness

[87] Entry 'facetus' in *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, I (1975); T. Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1991), I, 177.

[88] *Pace* Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 113.

[89] In *De Civilitate* Erasmus never uses *facetus* – but then his style in this work is, as its translator Brian McGregor observed, 'dry, pedantic, and somewhat repetitious', *Complete Works*, XXV, 272.

[90] Jaeger, *Courtliness*, 122, 127, 154–61; Zotz, 'Urbanitas', 409–11.

[91] *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (1982), 80, 116, 160, 270, 272. According to the Lanercost Chronicle, Grosseteste possessed *tanta curialitas*, cited Gieben, 'Grosseteste', 47–8.

[92] Indeed it ends with a chapter on the *curialitas* of the Virgin Mary, *Morale Scolarium*, c. 36.

[93] Printed by Gieben, 'Grosseteste', 71.

[94] Extracts from his text were, however, called *Liber curialis* and *curialitates ecclesiasticorum*, Gieben, 'Grosseteste', 49, 70.

[95] Lanfranc, 'Liber de corpore et sanguine', *Patrologia Latina*, 150, 414.

[96] Zotz, 'Urbanitas', 393, 406.

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curialitatem – or rather *scurrilitatem* – of courtiers', wrote the English abbot, Alexander Neckam.[97] These monks were in the tradition of St Augustine and Gregory the Great for whom *urbanitas* was *perversio mentis*. But other clerics, court clergy, used precisely these same words in a positive sense.[98] The key words of the new genre drew attention to behaviour that was attractive and charming, which drew admiration, not to behaviour which satisfied Christian morality. Where the *Distichs* advocated worldly wisdom, courtly literature added elegance and refinement. This suggests that the impetus for the genre came, precisely as Jaeger argued, from courts, not from monasteries. The court was a school, as it always had been, for example in King Alfred's day as described by Asser.[99] Becket's household was a school of conduct not because Thomas was so religious but because he was so civilised; he possessed, wrote Herbert of Bosham, *gratia civilis et urbana*.[100] A famous passage in the Black Book of the Household of Edward IV lays down that the master of the boys being brought up at court was to teach them to ride, to joust, 'to have all courtesy in words, deeds and degrees, the rules of goings and sittings, various languages and other virtuous learning, to play the harp, pipe, sing and dance, and with other honest and temperate behaving and patience' [101] It has been argued that although the 'ability to make a charming and memorable social impression ... must always have been of importance in the courts of kings or magnates', it was not until the later sixteenth century that 'it became enshrined in literature as a major element in the self-image of the aristocracy'.[102] But it was precisely this ability to charm, *gracia morum*, which centuries earlier had shaped both language and genre, the establishment of a new genre and the creation of a new word, *curialitas* – 'courtoisie' in the new vernacular of the Francophone elite of England.

The fact that a cluster of key-words disliked by monks was dominant in the new genre undercuts Dilwyn Knox's argument that the inspiration for secular codes of comportment, beginning with the twelfth-century *Facetus* poems, came from the rules of disciplined behaviour cultivated

[97] Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, ed. T. Wright (Rolls Series, 1863), 312.

[98] Zotz, 'Urbitanitas', 396–406.

[99] Asser, c. 75. Cf. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, 113, for Hincmar's description of Louis the German's court as a school dealing with dress, deportment, speech and gesture (*habitu, incessu, verbo et actu*).

[100] 'He pleased the world as well as God. His table was more like Caesar's than a prelate's.' *Vita Sancti Thomae*, 230–1.

[101] He was also to supervise them at table 'how mannerly they eat and drink, and to their communication and other forms curial, after the book of urbanitie'. All this was to be according to 'the schools of urbanitie and nurture of England', Myers, *The Household of Edward IV*, 126–7.

[102] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 121.

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in monasteries.[103] His argument seems to have won approval from early modern historians, and I can only suppose that this is because, as Knox himself pointed out, it is an argument in tune with the belief that 'the dominant cultural development of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries' was 'the transition from a culture and religion sustained primarily by clerics and religious institutions to one more secular in organization, transmission and content'.[104] It might more plausibly be argued that Erasmus's preference for *civilitas* was in part an attempt to free good manners from courtly ambiguities. In that case Erasmus's 'Renaissance' code was more influenced by religious values than the codes produced by his medieval clerical predecessors had been. If such had been his intent, then he failed. As Martin Ingram has emphasised, the key texts of sixteenth-century civility, imbued as they were with aristocratic ideals of honour and with scorn for 'clownish' or 'rude' behaviour, inevitably stood in an ambiguous relationship to Christian morality.[105] That is to say they contained precisely the same ambiguities as the earliest extant courtesy literature, and which had been central to its development and its values.

Someone who took on board Daniel's advice and who was able to stand up to the domineering women of Daniel's imagination – the women he called *matrone testiculate*[106] – would certainly match up to the model seventeenth-century English gentleman: 'at his best he could combine political leadership and intelligent financial management with courtesy, magnanimity and cultural sophistication in daily living'.[107] At this level of generality and optimism such a description could well apply to the gentleman of England five or six hundred years earlier.[108] There were, after all, some important continuities throughout the pre-

[103] Knox, '*Disciplina*', 107–35. Part of the problem is that in this article Knox consistently writes as though 'monastic' and 'clerical' were one and the same thing, a sleight of hand which elides the gulf between two very different sorts of clerics, the courtly and the austerely religious. Nicholls had earlier made a case for monastic influence on the origins of courtesy, pointing to similarities between provisions about table manners and spitting in courtesy books and monastic rules and customaries. But on Nicholls's evidence, it is only in provisions for receiving guests – when the outside world comes in – that we get phrases such as *iocundus*, *facetus*, Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, 27.

[104] Knox, '*Disciplina*', 117; see Cameron, ' "Civilized Religion" ', 49, and Ingram, 'Sexual Manners', 93.

[105] Ingram, 'Sexual Manners', 91–3. The suggestion that there was 'a new conception of manners which by implying a separation between good manners and morality allowed the first to be judged by the standards of the second', Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 199, is to ignore the monastic attacks on courtly manners.

[106] *Urbanus*, l. 1948.

[107] F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500–1700* (1994), 276.

[108] On the material culture of the late Anglo-Saxon aristocracy and gentry see R. Fleming, 'The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 23 (2000), 1–22; and on their close involvement with towns, *eadem*, 'Rural Elites and Urban Communities in Late-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 141 (1993).

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industrial period. 'The portfolio of ideas, attitudes and policies regarding wages, work, workers, subsistence, consumption, leisure and charity proved exceptionably durable, as did the behaviour of the labouring poor.'[109] The English kingdom was geographically no larger in the sixteenth than in the eleventh century and some fundamentals of government remained constant: 'a more or less centralised monarchy lacking a large bureaucracy, standing army or police force, with an absence of modern technology to transmit and enforce orders on the ground'.[110] The belief that towns and markets were essential to a civilised life-style was just as powerful in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (when new towns were founded at a faster rate than at any other period of English history) as in later times.[111]

There were, of course, changes, especially marked during the seventeenth century, which had an impact on the 'gentle' life-style. New fashions in dress and in house design (though in 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' the new houses still retained the basic division into master's side and servants' side).[112] Gentlemen and their families were able to enjoy more privacy, as the trend for provision of more private rooms visible since Anglo-Saxon times continued to unfold.[113] More gentlemen, accompanied by their wives, spent more time in London than had their medieval counterparts.[114] They may have taken baths less often.[115]

[109] J. Hatcher, 'Labour, Leisure and Economic Thought before the Nineteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998).

[110] C. Carpenter, 'Who Ruled the Midlands in the Later Middle Ages?', *Midland History*, 19 (1994), 5. Cf. A. McFarlane, 'Civility and the Decline of Magic', in *Civil Histories*, ed. Burke, Harrison and Slack, 156–7.

[111] Gillingham, 'Civilizing the English?', 38–9. See also P. Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), 36–62, on the long history of the appeal of commercial profit to nobility and gentry.

[112] D. Starkey, 'The Age of the Household', in *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. S. Medcalf (1981), 244. See also N. Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 151 (1996).

[113] For earlier re-buildings involving a tendency to create more and smaller, more private, more functionally defined rooms, C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (1999), 59–68. For similar fashions in religious houses where the monks wished to live like gentlemen, B. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100–1540* (1993), 78n, 130–3. For Daniel's awareness of the head of the house's private space, *Urbanus*, ll. 1360–5.

[114] Heal and Holmes, *Gentry 1500–1700*, 312–15. We should not, however, underestimate the amount of time the late medieval gentry spent in London, often leaving their wives to look after their country estates, C. Richmond, 'The Pastons and London', in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. S. R. Jones, R. Marks and A. J. Minnis (York, 2000), 213. By then the aristocracy tended to move, in a 'modern pattern', between a London house and just one or two major country houses, Dyer, *Standards of Living*, 99–100. See also C. Barron, 'Centres of Conspicuous Consumption: The Aristocratic Town House in London 1200–1550', *London Journal*, 20 (1995).

[115] K. Thomas, 'Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England', in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (1994), 58, 61.

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Some of these changes had an impact on what was expected of the accomplished gentleman. The new rules of chess help to explain the game's decline as a gentlemanly pastime.[116] Gentlemen were expected to appreciate music, but stunning virtuosity was no longer an aristocratic ideal as it had been in the twelfth century.[117] Technological changes in armour and weaponry led to the end of the tournament and to the precipitate decline in falconry.[118] More importantly they changed the nature of war. Whether gentlemen could expect to go to war more or less often is another question altogether, and one on which courtesy literature throws no light, though many of them continued to learn how to fight.[119] Most important of all was the 'decline of the great noble household', particularly marked in the later seventeenth century.[120] As the great household declined as a place of education a higher proportion of the gentry attended school and university, and this clearly meant that service in the hall and at table no longer played the prominent role in codes of manners that it once had done. By unduly emphasising the service aspect of courtesy, historians have focused attention on the area of significant change and rather tended to assume that everything else changed with it.

Above all, the notion that there were fundamental changes in socio-political values seems to me to be based on generalisations which are always far too sweeping and often misconceived. I remain struck by how often I read even in very recent works statements such as: the Tudors turned chivalry to the service of the state;[121] or: in the sixteenth century an honour cult of lineage and violence declined in the face of increasing opposition from the 'humanist' concept of a 'nobility of virtue'.[122] Such views are essentially paraphrases of Lawrence Stone's statement that 'the medieval system of values placed obedience to the public authority and devotion to the common good below individual

[116] R. Eales, *Chess: The History of a Game* (1985), 71–9.

[117] C. Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (1987), ch. 1.

[118] R. Grassby, 'The Decline of Falconry in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 157 (1997), 37–62. A. Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (1987), 40–2. On fishing see R. C. Hoffmann, 'Fishing for Sport in Medieval Europe: New Evidence', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 877–902.

[119] S. Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* (2000).

[120] F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), esp. 91, 147–52, 165–6. K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600* (Oxford, 1988) for the lack of change prior to 1600.

[121] T. Meron, *Bloody Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1998), 109.

[122] Most such statements reflect the influential views of M. E. James, e.g. *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986). However, his belief that ancient ideas on virtuous and noble conduct had little or no influence until they appeared in print is founded upon the usual assumptions about the scale and ubiquity of violence in medieval English politics. See Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, 237, for another qualification of his theory of a seventeenth-century attenuation of honour.

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loyalty ... Under such circumstances disruption of public order by private violence was inevitable.'[123] Here we remain in the thought-world of Norbert Elias, according to whom a 'permanent readiness to fight, weapon in hand, was a vital necessity in medieval society'.[124] Most historians of early modern England write as though the political patterns of the Wars of the Roses were typical of the medieval centuries, whereas in fact they are highly atypical. I know of no evidence that the secular elite of twelfth- or thirteenth-century England was more prone to violence than the secular elite of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even in the twelfth century, the heyday of the castle, castles were more about image and display, powerhouses in that sense, than they were places primarily designed to withstand siege.[125] The notion that with every passing century even the English gentleman became more peaceful than before is just one of those 'grand evolutionary narratives that we need to get away from'.[126] Recent work by landscape historians and archaeologists is showing that once we get away from the Scottish and Welsh marches then designed landscapes, ornamental fishponds and gardens, dovecotes, viewing pavilions, roof walks, a concern for comfort rather than defence, were all there in medieval England – it is just that, above ground, they barely survive, and certainly make less impression than ruined walls which appear to speak of war.[127]

While it is the case that with the decline of the crusading ideal, with the end of the tournament in the 1620s and with new architectural fashions, the *image* of aristocracy was less martial than in previous centuries, I am not sure that the reality was. Consider the evidence of household accounts and inventories. Christopher Dyer has pointed to 'the lack of much household expenditure on weapons, except in the unusual circumstances of the Scottish border'; 'inventories and the bequest made in gentry wills show that silver plate, bedding and clothes figured among their most valuable possessions, followed by kitchen and farming equipment. Valuable armour and weapons tended to be owned by a minority.' In 1397 Thomas duke of Gloucester's armour was valued at £103, his books at £124, and both items were far outweighed by

[123] L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558–1641* (Oxford, 1967), 96–7.

[124] Elias's belief that 'the knight's life is divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love', *Civilizing Process*, 176, would have surprised Daniel of Beccles.

[125] Heslop, 'Orford Castle'; C. Coulson, Cultural Realities and Reappraisals in English Castle-Study', *Journal of Medieval Hisory*, 22 (1996), 171–208; *idem*, 'Peaceable Power in English Castles', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 23 (2000/1), 69–95.

[126] M. S. R. Jenner, 'Civilization and Deodorization? Smell in Early Modern English Culture', in *Civil Histories*, ed. Burke, Harrison and Slack, 143.

[127] C. Taylor, 'Medieval Ornamental Landscapes', *Landscapes*, 1 (2000), 38–55; R. Liddiard, 'Castle Rising, Norfolk: A "Landscape of Lordship"?', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 22 (1999/2000).

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what he spent on tapestries, beds, chapel vestments and silver plate.[128] Taking up arms against the crown was always regarded as treason in law, and although it was occasionally risked, it was risked no more often in thirteenth-and fourteenth-century England than in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Stone himself provided plenty of evidence for the physical violence with which aristocratic disputes were still being pursued in the second half of sixteenth century. Indeed in the rapier and the duel the gentleman-swordsman of the sixteenth and later centuries found ways of shedding blood which had escaped his medieval ancestors. No wonder Lodowick Bryskett in his *A Discourse of Civil Life* written in the 1580s called the recent emergence of the duel 'barbarous ... and contrary to all honest and civil conversation'.[129] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the gentlemanly elite were more likely to kill one another in pursuit of political ends than they had been in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the gentle values of chivalrous compassion towards the defeated so much emphasised in contemporary didactic and romantic literature were also practised in real political life – hence the astonishment of an early Stuart historian, Samuel Daniel, at the lack of bloodshed during the so-called 'Anarchy' of Stephen's reign.[130] On the one hand, the image of gentleman as politician and magistrate goes back to Daniel of Beccles and the twelfth century; on the other, the image of gentleman as officer and swordsman survived into the seventeenth century and beyond.[131]

Even if we were to accept the case for a relatively high level of elite literacy in medieval England, it would be absurd not to insist that the printing press enabled readers to obtain infinitely more reading matter than before, to become, in short, more bookish. What difference would this make? It is, for example, true that they could now read books on dancing, but it is not immediately obvious that this would either have made them better dancers or have added to the pleasure they took in dancing.[132] But one effect of the print revolution was to deliver

[128] Dyer, *Standards of Living*, 53, 76–7.

[129] L. Bryskett, *Literary Works*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (1972), 65–85, esp. 70–1.

[130] S. Daniel, *The Collection of the Historie of England* (1618), 67. By basing his views on the high level of aristocratic bloodshed in medieval England on ducal statistics, T. H. Hollingsworth, 'A Demographic Study of the British Ducal Families', *Population Studies*, 11 (1957), 8, Becker took no account of anything before 1337 when the first English dukedom was created, *Civility and Society*, 5.

[131] Daniel of Beccles would have had no difficulty in agreeing with John Aubrey's view (cited by Heal and Holmes, *Gentry 1500–1700*, 276), of the educated gentleman: 'the management of his estates will take up most of his time, besides visits and returns of visits'.

[132] For the spread of the earliest treatises on dancing, composed in mid-fifteenth-century Italy, via France to England, N. Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066–1530* (1984), 173–4.

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gentleman-readers into the hands of the humanists who came to dominate the curriculum and enjoy a monopoly of the press. Humanists did not refer to medieval authors even when they were merely repeating or echoing them, nor did they look to medieval figures as models of good conduct.[133] All their models of good conduct and good style were drawn from antiquity. One side effect of Erasmus's *De Civilitate* or of, for example, Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governor* was to dump everything that had been done or thought between 400 and 1500 into a black hole. In this paper I hope to have shown that the basic ideals of gentlemanly conduct are several centuries older and hence more deeply entrenched than is sometimes supposed; I hope also to have rescued some of the fairly commonplace and trite thoughts of some medieval authors from the oblivion to which they had been consigned by humanists, anxious to make their own fairly commonplace and trite thoughts seem deeply significant.

[133] Contrast the references to Roland and Oliver, to Gawain, to Horn and Ipomedon as models of good conduct in the Anglo-Norman *Urbain*, Parsons, 'Anglo-Norman Books', 411.

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