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HOUSES, HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES IN  
MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE



## PARERGON

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# In Service and at Home: Didactic Texts for Children and Young People, c. 1400–1600

Merridee L. Bailey

Until recently, literary texts produced either in manuscript or printed form between c. 1400 and 1600 were assumed to neglect the interests of children and young people. A selection of didactic texts from this period, however, discusses children and attitudes to the time of 'childhood', with these motifs relevant to both elite secular or ecclesiastical households. The interests of children and young people are addressed within these didactic examples, which in turn reveal developments occurring in the creation of non-elite, nuclear family audiences primarily in the late fifteenth century.

The non-fictional, instructional literature disseminated and circulated over the medieval and early modern period is habitually catalogued as didactic literature; that is, a literature which instructed, educated, and informed. Didactic texts hold a special significance to one of the more overlooked social groups of this time or indeed of any time; that is, children and young people. The *topoi* of social lessons and moral edification common to didactic literature were particularly relevant to the culture of childhood, notably corresponding to middle childhood or *pueritia*, of around seven to twelve years in girls and fourteen years in boys, and youth or *adolescencia*, lasting from *pueritia* until adulthood, which could occur as late as twenty-eight years.<sup>1</sup> In most cases this was a literature relevant and sympathetic to the social education and instruction of boys and young men falling within these age groups.<sup>2</sup> However it is problematic to compress all didactic literature

1 There have been a number of discussions on the ages of childhood in various studies. See in particular Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), Chapter 2; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 6–8; and also, Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 8–13, 109–14. Didactic texts were often ambiguous in using age-specific terminology, making it difficult to differentiate between certain ages and interests.

2 For an analysis of gender considerations in didactic literature see Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark, eds, *Medieval Conduct* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), especially Chapters 3–8.

into a single category, suggesting a unity and coherence lacking within the aims, goals, and motivations of the texts themselves. A structural difference beginning to take shape within this literature over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and which has until this point received little attention, is the differing household environments invoked within the narratives.<sup>3</sup> The first household commonly invoked in fifteenth-century poems was an elite secular or ecclesiastical household, superseded in sixteenth-century literature by a focus on smaller nuclear family household units. The body of extant didactic poems, limited to the media of manuscripts alone,<sup>4</sup> offers ample choice for investigation. This article maps issues from the popular and widely copied vernacular English translation of the poem *Stans puer ad mensam*, supplemented by occasional references to other contemporary poems including *The Good Wife Wold a Pylgremage*, *The Babees' Book*, and miscellaneous smaller pieces of verse found in manuscript collections, such as the late-sixteenth-century Harleian MS 787.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it also considers some pivotal didactic works published by William Caxton between 1476 and 1492 as well as later sixteenth-century printed books aimed at nuclear family households. This body of works reveals two discrete households addressed, with different aims and goals pertinent to specific domestic environments and the children and young people most often found there informing the direction and feel of the narrative. However this literature retains a fundamental similarity in that the texts commonly

- 3 *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. Daniel T. Kline (New York: Routledge, 2003), does not consider the role of the household or even the role of the family, despite being an otherwise extensive analysis of various didactic texts.
- 4 Jonathan Nicholls has identified ten English courtesy poems, listed in Appendix B of *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1985). Of these, Nicholls considers eight to be mainly concerned with table etiquette, a significant proportion of his data. Although it should be noted that his list is not exhaustive and omits the poems *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, *How the Good Wife Wold a Pylgremage*, the *Thewis of Gud Women*, and *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*. Of these extant poems I have selected a fairly small number to consider in depth, but they are ones which demonstrate dominant thematic concepts across the genre.
- 5 *Stans puer ad mensam* (Lydgate's translations) dates from around the first quarter of the fifteenth century and appears in over twenty extant manuscripts; see n. 13 for details of some manuscripts. *The Good Wife Wold a Pylgremage* is found only in a single manuscript, Porkington MS 10, now National Library of Wales Brogyntyn MS ii.1, fols 135<sup>v</sup>–38<sup>v</sup>. *The Babees' Book* is found in British Library, Harley MS 5086, f. 86<sup>r</sup>. Also, BL, Harl. MS 787, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>, catalogued as: 'Severall papers found in Mr. Dells Study, Secretary to Bishop Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury.'

addressed issues relevant to the social education of children and young people. This literary *topos* was centred upon identifying and circulating common assumptions about the hierarchical social order and proper behaviour. The childhood identity that this created was predicated on adherence towards a coherent set of observable social codes and conventions.

My intention is to investigate a divergence occurring in the type of household audiences accessing didactic literature, and to examine apparent changes in the culture of childhood and adolescence during the medieval and early modern period, in particular how identity was formed and the emphasis given to certain childlike and adolescent characteristics and behaviours. This raises the question of whether it is possible to interpret the relationship between text and social context? That is, does the content of didactic literature allow us to directly comprehend real life household practice and through this, to identify some of the more popular and dominant notions of childhood and adolescence presented to audiences? This can partly be answered by considering the texts as ideological, rather than directly representative, with ideological frameworks acting as indicators of desirable social contexts. The *ideological* therefore is a starting point which must be considered in order to begin to imagine how actual households functioned and the roles held by various members existing within these spaces.<sup>6</sup>

The first household genre to be addressed in this paper is one of elite secular or ecclesiastical households and an associated 'courtesy' literature which commonly invoked this environment.<sup>7</sup> Courtesy literature was commonplace in the English literary record in manuscript form from the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, in both Latin and vernacular English. This was a literature that emphasized large elite households and exhibited a particular concern with the social network of reciprocal hospitality and with identifying and disseminating a coherent set of social conventions that informed a child and young person's public gestures and

6 Recently this question was raised by Ashley and Clark, eds, *Medieval Conduct*, which considered the issue of 'text and practice'. In particular essays by Jennifer Rondeau and Anna Dronzek consider this, with Dronzek stating at the outset that her interest is to 'examine theory, not practice; it does not address how successful the authors of conduct literature were in imposing this educational model upon their readers or their readers' responses.' (Anna Dronzek, 'Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books', in *Medieval Conduct*, pp. 135–59 (p. 136).

7 For studies of elite secular households see Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). Also, C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).



actions. The second household that this can be compared with is one that we understand as the more familiar ‘nuclear’ family of parents and children, along with servants, in smaller households.<sup>8</sup> Felicity Riddy’s important study of the didactic poem for girls, *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, situates the household of the urban middling or ‘bourgeois’ classes at the centre of the construction of feminine values that harmonized with the economic and social role of that urban household unit.<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of the ‘household’, either this small urban unit or larger elite environments, can therefore locate ideas and themes within didactic literature pertaining to identity and socialization.

Courtesy literature of the thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries is commonly characterized by its narration of correct social behaviour, good manners, appropriate conduct, and accepted customs. These codes of behaviour were often discussed in direct relation to young servants who lived and worked away from their natal families in an elite household and who performed important public and social tasks within this structure, and in particular within the structure of public hospitality that commonly took place there. Anna Bryson has recently argued that “‘good manners’ [are] coherent social codes which reveal much about the changing self-image and social strategies’ of dominant aristocratic culture,<sup>10</sup> anchoring the literary texts to the networks of social interaction and regulation relevant to the time when they were popularly circulated. Courtesy infused values often related to the physical actions of young servants at the table, and informed the preoccupation with cleanliness and duty towards the lord of the house. This created a coherent set of social codes defined around observable public gestures, actions, and the importance of behaving in ways that displayed ‘good manners’. ‘Courtesy’<sup>11</sup> itself emphasizes the importance of public actions defining identity.

8 David Herlihy’s definition of a family as ‘a coresidential unit, with a kin group at its core’ reflects the family/household being described here (‘The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment’, *Journal of Family History*, 8 (1983), 116–30 (p. 117). See, also, David Herlihy, ‘The Family and Religious Ideologies in Medieval Europe’, *Journal of Family History*, 12 (1987), 3–17.

9 ‘Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text’, *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 66–86.

10 *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 276.

11 The *OED* variously defines ‘courtesy’ as: ‘Courtly elegance, politeness of manners, graceful politeness’ c. 1225–1889, also as: ‘the customary expression of respect by action or gesture, esp. to a superior’, c. 1513–1645, and: ‘As a quality: Courteous disposition; courteousness; also nobleness, generosity, benevolence, goodness’, c. 1297–1891.

Courtesy literature assumes a role in teaching children and young people how to behave in public, and intensely social, environments.

Compared to this literature, which accentuated the elements of elite protocol, formal manners, and public courtesy, later fifteenth-century literature and certainly sixteenth-century literature emphasizes a child's inner moral character and virtuous behaviour through a complex discussion of religious activities, piety, morality, and virtue. Norbert Elias' interesting study of the development of 'civility' in the sixteenth century, initially published in 1939 and later made available to English-speaking historians in the late 1970s, first highlighted a change from established courtesy values towards a more sophisticated 'civility' in literary tropes, carrying with it an emphasis on social interaction with others and collective negotiations between members of society.<sup>12</sup> Bryson's 1998 study has more recently expanded this and observed a gradual disappearance of 'courtesy' in conduct in England within elite classes. This article works within the framework of demonstrated social and literary transformation but argues against a sixteenth-century chronology of change and seeks to offer a new perspective on the role played by 'virtue' as a core element of social and cultural movement. The varying emphases on what behaviour should ideally demonstrate is partly dependent on the different ways children and young people and 'childhood as a time of life' were perceived in each of the different household structures over this two-hundred-year period.

*Stans puer ad mensam*, written predominantly in rime royal stanzas, is perhaps the best known and most widely circulated of all of the early courtesy poems for younger children and elite young servants. The characteristics of service and youth are first introduced to the reader within the title, where the references to the boy (*puer*) are immediately apparent. This specific use of *puer* indicates a younger child in a pre-adolescent stage and there are later references to childish behaviour and activities that emphasize this age group.

Originally written in the mid-thirteenth century by the theologian and long-serving Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste (c. 1170–1253), it is the poet John Lydgate's early fifteenth-century English translation that carries forward a message of fifteenth-century perceptions of childhood and identity. Lydgate's translation:

Who speketh to the in eny man[ner] of place/  
Lomysshycche cast not thi hed adowne/

12 *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott with some notes and corrections by the author, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, rev. ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

But w[ith] sadd chere loke hym in the face//  
 Walke demeverly by stret in the towne and a vertise  
 the by wisdom and reson//  
 Withe Inssolnte laghtins thou do none offence.<sup>13</sup>

gives the child a role in both the public space of the street as well as the domestic household and conjures the image of public performance ('Walke demeverly by stret in the towne') and of the importance of the child's observable gestures as an indicator of good manners ('Withe Inssolnte laghtins thou do none offence').

In comparison to these ideals, with their inferences of public gestures and courteous demeanor, the late-sixteenth-century poem *How to rule one's Self and one's House* in Harleian MS 787 lists precepts for monitoring good behaviour and actions within a smaller natal kinship group.<sup>14</sup> Half of the instructions are listed under the heading *Domus* and depict a father's responsibility towards his children and his house:

Bring up thy children in uertuous callinge;  
 Teach them to know & feare God;  
 Keep them in due obedience;  
 Nourish them not in delicacye.  
 Gouverne thy House in order, for in disorder  
 noe House may stand.<sup>15</sup>

13 Taken from British Library, Stowe MS 982, fols 10<sup>r</sup>-11<sup>r</sup>, late fifteenth century. Here the poem is introduced as a *boke of curtese*. There are numerous surviving manuscript examples of *Stans puer ad mensam* including Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 853 (c. 1430), British Library, Harl. MS 2251, fols 148-49 (c. 1460), a longer and much changed copy in Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 61, leaf 17, (c. 1463-83), British Library, Cotton Caligula A ii, fols 14<sup>r</sup>-15<sup>v</sup> (second half of the fifteenth century), BL, Harl. MS 4011, fols 1-1<sup>v</sup>, also British Library, Lansdowne MS 699, fols 83-85 (fifteenth century), British Library, Add. MS 5467, fols 67<sup>r</sup>-68<sup>v</sup> (mid- to late fifteenth century), as well as a schoolboy copy done in Latin in BL, Add. MS 37075, fols 20<sup>r-v</sup>, (fifteenth century). F. J. Furnivall published Lambeth MS 853 with references to Harl. MS 2251 in *The Babees Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall's Texts by Edith Rickert* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966), pp. 26-31.

14 BL, Harl. MS 787, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>. F. J. Funivall edited this poem in *Queene Elizabethes Achademy: A Booke of Precedence, &c., with Essays on Italian and German Books of Courtesy*, Early English Text Society, Extra Series, No. VIII (London: Trubner, 1869), p. 71. Furnivall has found nothing in the manuscript dating later than 1601, suggesting this verse is most likely to be a late-sixteenth-century creation.

15 The concept of a united household with a kinship group at its core, invoked in this poem,

In both didactic poems, children have been included in the environment of their specific household, but there are hints of some extensive and far-reaching divergences governing the way in which these children and young people were identified; who was principally addressed; the role that these children could assume in their environment, and the concomitant position of adults, particularly parents, contesting the position of the children.

In the earlier courtesy poem, the child is the main protagonist of the instructional lesson, which incorporated a practical element relating to hygiene, observable manners, and monitored behaviour: 'pare clene thi nayles thi handys wasshe also/ be fore thi mete & when thou dost aryse// syt in that place thou art assyned to'.<sup>16</sup> The child is addressed constantly with the pronoun 'thi'<sup>17</sup> as in: 'pyke not thi nose', and 'kepe clene thi lyppes for fat of flesche or fische'.<sup>18</sup> These directions directly appeal to the child as an active and individual participant. In the didactic poem for girls, *The Good Wyfe Wold a Pylgremage*, surviving in one manuscript from the mid- to late fifteenth century, the girl who is possibly older, perhaps at the stage entering adolescence, also 'hears'<sup>19</sup> lessons about good behaviour, in this case linked to sexual conduct:

Dogtt[ur] in all co[m]pany vppo[n] y[e] hally day  
 Whe[ther] y[ou] wylt daunce or syng  
 or w[i]tt thy fellowys pley  
 Honge thy gordoll nott to lowe  
 but take y[e] knot a way  
 Wher no beyd a bout y[e]  
 but hit fall for thyn a raye.<sup>20</sup>

In both examples, the narrative looks to specific child figures, who despite different probable ages, assume a dominant position within the text, with lessons aligned to their individual actions, genders, and appropriate behaviour.

mirrors the structure described in printed household manuals which flourished and thrived from the sixteenth century.

16 BL. Stowe MS 982, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>.

17 'Thy' and 'thou' could be used to address an inferior.

18 BL, Stowe MS 982, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>.

19 Dronzek, 'Gendered Theories', pp. 135–59, argues didactic poems for girls were more aural than those intended for boys, suggesting it was more common for girls to hear poems being read aloud to them while boys were encouraged to read texts themselves.

20 Brogyntyn MS ii.1, fol. 136<sup>v</sup>.

Underpinning this narrative technique is the suggestion not just that children and young people are important and prized recipients of didactic literature, but that children and young people of all ages have a measure of responsibility over their actions. Self-monitoring of behaviour is an important psychological characteristic embedded in the contemporary understanding of ‘childhood’, an attitude that begins to shift in later examples within sixteenth-century domestic family literature. The child or young person addressed in *Stans puer ad mensam* and in other contemporary poems including *The Boke of Curtasye* and John Russell’s *The Boke of Nurture* unquestionably receives advice and instruction.<sup>21</sup> In *Stans puer ad mensam* the young servant is clearly told how he should be behaving, most often in terms of activities at feasts, how he should serve his sovereign, how he should eat, and some quite sophisticated ideas about his interaction with others.<sup>22</sup> Didactic education is at the core of this literature for young people with instructions of this type commonly utilizing a one-way discussion between the experienced, authoritative adult who possesses knowledge of the social conventions and the inexperienced, younger recipient who is in need of it.<sup>23</sup> However it is the direct emphasis on the actions of the child or youth themselves in early courtesy poems that reveal underlying perceptions of personal autonomy and responsibility at the forefront of the culture of childhood. The young servant in *Stans puer ad mensam* has clearly been told what to do. In the case cited earlier there is a specific reference to walking demurely in the town which informs both the behaviour and the precise manner in which the activity is to be carried out. However there is an expectation that once he has been informed of this, that responsibility falls to him

21 *the boke of curtasye* BL Sloane MS 1986, fols 12<sup>r</sup>–27<sup>v</sup>. John Russell’s *the boke of nurture* BL, Sloane MS 1315, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>v</sup>.

22 My interpretation contrasts with Norbert Elias’ analysis which saw consideration for others develop only in the sixteenth century (*The Civilising Process*, pp. 68–69).

23 Russell uses this arrangement between the two figures of the youth and adult quite blatantly in his poem, *The Boke of Nurture*, BL, Sloane MS 1315. It begins by identifying the experienced adult (Russell) and the inexperienced young man and uses this as a platform to ‘reveal’ to the young person a number of different rules for governing behaviour and actions: ‘Sonne yf I the teche wylte thou hit lere | wylte thou be clerke marchaute or artysycere | Chamberlayne butteler panter or a kerv (carver) | ussher sewer ploweman or laborer’. To which the young person replies: ‘Off the office of butteler pant[er] and chaberlayne | Sewer kerv uss[h]er ewer[er] for tayne | And yema[n] of the seler I fayne | All thesse to lerne I wolde be rygte fayne.’ Russell then finishes with: ‘Sonne I shalt theche ye with ryght goode wyll’. fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. In all probability this was directed at an adolescent rather than a younger boy given the detailed career options and sophisticated lessons that are taught.

for this conduct. There are no adult figures taking responsibility away from him for his behaviour or for his actions.

In the later sixteenth-century poem, parents, and especially the father, rather than the young person, is the recipient of the instructional rules on how to govern behaviour and household. The sense of the family as a unit is described more overtly than in the courtesy poems for children and young people living and working within an elite household space. The conscious appeal to 'the family' rather than individuals is also becoming stronger: 'Loue, & liue with her in peace' is followed directly by 'Bring up thy children in uertuous callinge'<sup>24</sup> which incorporates the concomitant positions of the husband, wife, and children within the family structure. In this example, children have become part of the overall audience within the family, but the sense that the poem is directly speaking to them is now largely lost. In this example, the behaviour of children is in the hands of parents who hold a responsibility to see that they are brought up properly. This transfer of responsibility can be viewed in terms of a changing culture of childhood with perceptions of childhood and autonomy fluid constructs within the literature.

One reason for dwindling child autonomy relates to an overt shift in audience. Young servants in elite households are, by implication, living away from their natal families. It has been fairly well established that young people between the ages of twelve to fourteen and sometimes as young as seven or eight, who themselves could come from elite or gentry backgrounds although not necessarily so, were sent to live and work in new environments.<sup>25</sup> In elite houses this helped to reinforce social connections and facilitated the learning of courtesy, a process of which these poems are a tangible reminder.<sup>26</sup> It is not altogether surprising that elite courtesy poems do

24 BL, Harl. MS 787, fol. 9r.

25 Also connected to the system of apprenticeships (Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, Chapter 8). For a wider European context see Kathryn L. Reyerson, 'The Adolescent Apprentice/Worker in Medieval Montpellier', *Journal of Family History*, 17 (1992), 353–70.

26 In particular Woolgar, *The Great Household*, pp. 36–37; also Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 309–17. R. W. Southern's biography of Grosseteste in the *DNB* comments that Grosseteste was well regarded for his observance of the rules of courtesy and for the smooth and courteous running of his own household, despite his humble beginnings. Although he fails to give detailed evidence of this, Southern suggests that: 'The greatest magnates recognized the charm of his personality and the good manners that prevailed in his household, and they were glad to send their sons to him to learn the rules of courtesy' ('Grosseteste, Robert (c.1170–1253)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2007) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11665>]. *Stans puer ad mensam* conceivably sprang out of this environment.

not call upon fathers to monitor and govern their children. But this equation does not fully take into account the reality of the firmly established hierarchy within elite households. While the 'father' would have been largely absent from this immediate environment, young servants were still surrounded by adults and were very clearly under the ultimate authority of adult supervisors, roles variously filled by the position of Usher, Marshal, Steward, and Butler,<sup>27</sup> who assumed important functions within large elite households. The autonomy and responsibility given to young servants living and working in this elite space needs to be balanced against the adult authoritarian environment which would have existed.

More interestingly, there are implications for how concepts of childhood were observed differently between these two households over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Meredith Tilbury McMunn has looked at the position of children and young people in medieval vernacular French literature in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, suggesting that part of the psychological awareness of childhood lies in the absence of responsibility. Accordingly, the less responsibility children hold the more 'childlike' they are.<sup>28</sup>

Under this schema, the children and young people living and working in the elite households were not conceived to be as 'childlike' as were their sixteenth-century counterparts who lived in the nuclear family home and whose autonomy was subordinated to their parents' rule. This has the tendency to play into the idea that children are merely 'proto-adults' the further back one goes in history and that they were not considered to have unique qualities and behaviours inherent to them that set them apart from the state of adulthood.<sup>29</sup>

27 Many early courtesy poems mention the position and authority of these offices, including *the boke of curtesye*, in BL, Sloane MS 1986, which says: 'Whille marshall or usher come fro y[e] dore | And bydde the sitte or to borde the lede', fol. 12<sup>v</sup>. In William Caxton's *the Boke of Curtesye* the authority that adults in these positions have over younger servants is mentioned:

Be ye husht in chambre/scylent in halle  
Herken wel and gyue good audience  
Yf ussher or marchal for ony Rumour calle  
Put ye lauglers to rebuke for silence.

(William Caxton, *Book of Curtesye*, (Westminster, 1477/78), p. 5<sup>v</sup>)

28 'Children and Literature in Medieval France', *Annual of The Modern Language Association Seminar on Children's Literature and The Children's Literature Association*, 4 (1975), 51–58.

29 Aries is the most famous proponent of this, with his now infamous statement: 'In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist [...] In medieval society this awareness was lacking.' Phillipe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. R. Baldick, (Edinburgh: J and J Gray,

A potentially more interesting notion implicated in this psychological awareness of child autonomy and responsibility is the different functional states of being either a young servant or of living in a family. However this argument also conveniently overlooks the possibility that children and young servants who lived and worked within elite households still held onto their own unique culture and distinctly childlike characteristics which would set them apart from the adults surrounding them. While the early courtesy poems do instruct according to notions of privileged behaviour and protocols, they are very specifically identified with children and not replica adults. *Stans puer ad mensam* has a lovely and sympathetically written passage which is highly nuanced when it describes the unique qualities and characteristics of young children. It gives an indication of the culture of childhood as seen through the eyes of adult observers:

Be in mesur[e] not hastey but trefable  
 Ou[er] muche is not worthy in no thyng  
 Not to cruell nother to vengeable  
 Sone mevyd and sone for gevyng  
 And as hit is remenbyrd by writing  
 Wrethe of childyrne sone is ou[er]gon  
 W[ith] on apple partys be made at one.<sup>30</sup>

More interestingly still, the characteristics described do not relate to the function of service. The poem portrays children's quarrels with their contemporaries, and how one minute a child will be fighting and the next minute full of mirth:

In childer wrathe now mery & now at bate  
 In ther quarell is no gret violence  
 Ther fore let passe all wrathe and unkynd hate.<sup>31</sup>

The poem creates an awareness that children are unlike adults, who are vengeful when it comes to arguments. There is an interesting depiction in the Lambeth MS

1962), p. 128. *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of the Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005) is one of the more recent works to argue against Aries' thesis, using an interdisciplinary approach to soundly demonstrate medieval and early modern psychological concepts of childhood.

30 BL, Stowe MS 982, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>.

31 BL, Stowe MS 982, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>.



which presents the ideal and perhaps quite young child as ‘soft’ in measure and tractable.<sup>32</sup> This is itself harking back to the semi-medical and religious philosophy about the wax-like, fluid softness of young children and especially of infants, which was conducive to customs relevant to the early years of life, including swaddling, bathing, and massage, factors which were thought to be able to alter physiognomy.<sup>33</sup> I suspect that this also became a useful metaphor for adults to use when describing how impressionable children and young people were emotionally and behaviourally, and explicates why didactic literature of this type was used as a medium to press home the advantage of instilling correct behaviour in young people. The impression of youthful softness continued to be utilized in later didactic literature and William Caxton’s *Book of Good Manners* references this concept in relation to classical learning: ‘And therefore saynt An- | selme in his boke of symylitudes compareth Infancye or chyl- | dehode to ware whiche is softe’.<sup>34</sup>

*Stans puer ad mensam* presses forward its description of children in different emotional states including children at play, and how they can be happy, or weeping, or tempestuous. This does not reflect what we could expect to read about children working only as servants.<sup>35</sup> The constant pleas within *Stans puer ad mensam* for these young servants to behave themselves in the great hall at meal times, including advice on not eating too quickly and not being greedy and the highly personal tone admonishing those young servants who grin and make faces or jest at the table (‘Grennyng and mower at the table’)<sup>36</sup> are all suggesting in themselves that these young children were still behaving in recognizably unruly, ‘childlike’ fashions, even given their functional position of service in the household. It is not ultimately feasible to equate responsibility or autonomy to perceptions of childhood, or an awareness that something called childhood existed. Neither did status as a servant ultimately control the identity of young children in the fifteenth century.

By the sixteenth century there was a sizeable catalogue of printed books published in England, particularly from London, for a family audience, most of

32 Lambeth MS 853, p. 154. In numerous later copies of the poem this has been amended to ‘meek’.

33 *De Proprietatibus Rerum, Liber Sextus. On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, A Critical Text, Volume 1*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 298–305. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, Chapter 5.

34 William Caxton, *Book of Good Manners*, (Westminster, 1487), p. fvi<sup>r</sup>.

35 Nicholas Orme, ‘Child’s Play in Medieval England’, *History Today*, 51.10 (2001), 49–55.

36 Stowe MS 982, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>.

which included religious teachings as part of household activity and which had distinct segments on the 'bringing up' of children. Proper upbringing, rather than courteous manners, becomes a dominant concern of this household literature in a way that earlier courtesy poems did not incorporate. A parallel development occurring in the household literature of the sixteenth century is a focus on the moral identity and character of children and young people, and no longer only the observable displays of courtesy that had previously dominated earlier texts. Caxton's publications from the period 1476 to his death in 1492 show signs of being a transitional stage between these two philosophies, with his work blending advice on manners and observable behaviour with moral instruction. The preoccupation with the moral identity of children and young people is increasingly visible as a concern within didactic texts and was articulated through a discussion of the virtues and vices of the children and young people.<sup>37</sup> In this way, the older narratives of good manners and social protocol became subsumed into more complex discussions fostering moral development, stressed through instructions on how to avoid vice and sin across a range of daily behaviours for these children and young people. Good manners are not displaced entirely from the corpus of late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature for children and certainly morality/virtue had played a part in earlier medieval didactic poems. Overeating and the sin of gluttony was a recurrent concern of early courtesy poems and was often invoked when demonstrating how children should display moderation at the table. It is more the case that by the end of the fifteenth century the instruction of morality was increasingly achieved through the didactic literature parents and children read. Contemporary readers drawn from both child and adult reading networks may have internalized these didactic lessons by seeing moral and virtuous behaviour as increasingly indistinguishable from the previous learning of good manners.

The increasing focus on the moral identity and behaviour of children and youths partly explains why autonomy is removed from children and placed into the hands of adults. Youth is frequently depicted as a time of life when character and identity is formed, either for good or bad, and adult anxieties often defined childhood as a time when behaviour and character could be shaped. The anonymous author of the courtesy verse, *The Babees Book*, found only in Harleian MS 5086 (c. 1475) begins his text with the idea that: 'Vertues to knowe thaym forto haue and

37 'Virtue' is separated from 'courtesy' by an emphasis on morality and conformity to moral principles in life and conduct. It also has a religious element relating to the four cardinal or natural virtues (justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude) and three theological virtues (faith, hope, charity).

vse | Is thing moste heelfulle in this worlde trevly | Therefore in feythe I wole me  
 nat excuse | From this labour ywys nor hit Refuse'.<sup>38</sup> Nearly a century later Francis  
 Seager's popular book, *The schoole of vertue* (1557) unsubtly calls attention to a  
 similar idea in the morning prayer:

That as we in yeares  
 And body do growe  
 So in good vertues  
 we may lykewyse flowe  
 To thy honour  
 and ioy of our parentes  
 Learninge to lyue well  
 and kepe thy comaundmentes.  
 In flyinge from all  
 Vice synne and cryme  
 Applyinge our bookes  
 not losynge our tyme.<sup>39</sup>

Paul Griffiths calls youth a 'contested territory' where the struggle with  
 moralistic ideology was at war with what was seen as the natural propensity for  
 younger people to behave wilfully, and especially to behave in sexually immoral  
 ways.<sup>40</sup> This conceptualization of youth exploits the wide potential for behavioral

38 BL, Harl. MS 5086, c. 1475, fol. 86<sup>r</sup>.

39 *The schoole of vertue, and booke of good nourture for chyl dren, and youth to learne theyer  
 dutie by. Newly persued, corrected, and augmented by the fyrst auctour. F.S with a briefe  
 declaration of the dutie of eche degree. Anno. 1557* (London: Wyllyam Seares, 1557), p. Aii  
 v. And also in the 1582 edn, p. Aiii v and the 1593 edn, p. A3 v. The phrase 'Applyinge our  
 bookes', combined with the later references to going to school and schoolmasters, reinforces  
 the image of a young (male) child of at least seven years of age reading the text, since seven  
 was frequently mentioned as the time for formal education to commence. It also emphasizes  
 the idea of childhood as a time of learning in an educational framework as well as socially  
 and religiously.

40 *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon  
 Press, 1996), first mentioned on p. 13. Also Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, Steve Hindle, eds,  
*The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (New York: St Martin's Press,  
 1996), Chapter 5. Griffiths' evidence, admittedly from the late sixteenth century, suggests  
 that entering service or apprenticeship restricted the authority and independence of young  
 people, which does not seem to be the case in early courtesy literature where these qualities  
 are incorporated into service itself.

moulding and shaping.<sup>41</sup> If this was the equation drawn between youth and behaviour, and the literature seems to reinforce this ideology, then increasing the time of youth by removing authority and autonomy from young people meant that authorities, especially parents, could increasingly monitor, govern, and socialize young people properly over longer periods. Curtailing independence in the family home enforces adult authority and sees the household become increasingly important as the arena where this socialization could develop.

As part of this, the role of fathers and the family in late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature becomes progressively more central to the upbringing of children. Increasingly, parents are addressed as the main readers of texts, who will then take the lessons they learn and apply them to their children. In this way advice for a broader age range becomes possible because it is parents rather than children who are directly accessing the lessons about upbringing.<sup>42</sup> At the same time a shift towards a non-elite audience and particularly a mercantile audience was a feature in driving household and parental advice literature in the sixteenth century. Caxton almost certainly contributed to a growing market of books for this audience through his choice of texts to publish and through unambiguous references to the reading interests of his mercantile friends and acquaintances.<sup>43</sup>

41 A concern with sexual conduct and morality is something that dominates didactic advice for women.

42 Juan Luis Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, translated into English by Richard Hart in 1529, begins by discussing infancy and the practice of wet nursing.

43 Caxton introduces the *Book of Good Manners* by explaining that the text was provided to him by: 'An honest man/& a special | frende of myn a Mercer of london named wyllia[m] praat'. Similarly the *Royal Book* (1485/86) was translated out of French: 'at | the request & specyal desyre of a synguler frende of myn a mer- | cer of lo[n]don'. Caxton's epilogues and prologues can also hint at his understanding of a more universal readership. *Reynard the Fox* (1481) acknowledges the interests of non-noble readers, linked to the imagery of elite environments: 'men maye lerne to come to the subtyl knoweleche of su- | che thynges as dayly ben vused & had in the counseylls | of lordes and prelates gostly and worldly/and also | emonge marchantes and other comone peple/And this| booke is maad for nede and prouffyte of alle god folke'. Recently Dorsey Armstrong looked at the audience of Caxton's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485) and has credibly argued that Caxton: 'seems much more interested in unifying his readership by means of a gender identification that cuts across class lines', which effectively argues for an inclusive rather than an exclusive class based readership ('Gender and the Script/Print Continuum: Caxton's *Morte Darthur*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 21 (2004), 133–50 (p. 135). The gendered reading implications for Caxton's works are something that cannot be analysed here.

The *Book of Good Manners*, printed by Caxton in 1487, illustrates this transition between a child's responsibility and a parent's responsibility in the family household, successfully managing to combine both philosophies within the narrative. The concept of children being responsible for their salvation and their religious observance is incorporated into long established perceptions of childhood:

For syth they haue wytte and understondyng [...] & they shal be pugnysshid  
of god yf they doo ouy uyll.<sup>44</sup>

However the negotiation between the responsibilities of parents in the upbringing of children becomes progressively more expressed through parental duties: 'fader and moder ough -| ten besyly to thynken on theyr chyldren. And to doo | payne by good doctrine and by good techynges that they be | by good doctrine instructe'.<sup>45</sup> Three years earlier, Caxton's own translation of a French version of Cato, published as *Caton*, had integrated this specific idea, and he wrote extensively about the role of parents and especially the father as the dominant factor in parent/child relations:

Thou oughtest to teche to thy chyldren good doctrynne | and  
good condycions/ for the phylosopher sayth | in the viii book of  
ethyques/ that the fader is cause of al that | the chyldren done.<sup>46</sup>

Lessons from antiquity were used to provide dramatic illustration of the role of fathers in teaching their children. Zeno is shown as blaming his father for failing to teach him well in his youth, which ultimately steers him to a life of gambling, theft and eventually leads to his death and the bitter pronouncement:

44 *Book of Good Manners*, p. fvi<sup>v</sup>. The stark reality of infant death is also acknowledged and young people are warned not to think their age will protect them from death and judgement: 'And thus nature | hath no certayn terme of lyuyng. Therefore no yong man ne | woman ought not for hope of longe lyf to take ony hardy- | [torn] for to doo euyl.' p. fvi<sup>v</sup>. Since the seventh century the practice of infant baptism has demonstrated the connection between salvation, sin, and childhood. The belief that children have a responsibility over their religious obedience survives in both Catholic and Protestant literature and is one of the themes that can be found in both household genres over this period.

45 *Book of Good Manners*, p. giiii<sup>r</sup>.

46 *Here begynneth the prologue or prohemye of the book callid Caton*, (Westminster, 1484), p. avi<sup>r</sup>.

'fader yf ye had wel taught [...] me in my yongthe in good condycions/ I shold not haue | ben brought hyther for to be hanged'.<sup>47</sup> An altogether more poignant example comes from the handwritten schoolbook of a fifteenth-century grammar schoolboy probably from London, who wrote: 'I reget me now evy day mor & mor that my fadyr & my modyr made so myche of me when y was yong for and they hade lete me of my wyll & desyer'.<sup>48</sup>

Caxton's 'series' of didactic books for children,<sup>49</sup> including the first printed edition of *Stans puer ad mensam*, *Parvus Cato*, the *Book of Curtesye*, the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* and the *Book of Good Manners*<sup>50</sup> are the earliest English printed didactic books that use specific moral subjects to talk about the activities and behaviour of children and young people. In these texts the word 'virtue' becomes increasingly prominent at the same time that the word 'courtesy' starts to decrease in value and emphasis. Caxton's the *Book of Curtesye* is an ironic example of this transformation at play within a text. The title explicitly references the values of 'courtesy' despite the first six stanzas making no use of this phrase. Instead the characteristics of 'virtue' are emphasized:

Vyce or vertue to folowe ande empresse  
 In mynde/and therefore/to styre & remeue  
 You from vice/ande to vertue adresse  
 That one to folowe/and that other teschewe.<sup>51</sup>

47 Caxton, *Caton*, p. avi<sup>v</sup>.

48 BL, Add. MS. 37075, fol. 275<sup>v</sup>.

49 William Kuskin has persuasively argued that Caxton created a series of texts unified around common themes, which ultimately created a cohesive framework or program of learning for English readers in the late fifteenth century. His particular focus on the three individual texts, *Godeffroy of Boloynes* (1481), *Le Morte Darthur* (1485) and *Charles the Grete* (1485) as part of the Nine Worthies series shows how Caxton himself conceptually linked individual texts as part of a wider series of instruction. Caxton's 'series' of didactic texts can be read as a unified body of work, which presented a unified, cohesive sequence of advice to his readers. See William Kuskin, 'Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture', *English Literary History*, 66 (1999), 511–51 for this interesting analysis.

50 William Caxton, *Stans puer ad mensam* (Westminster, 1476). William Caxton, *Hic incipit parvus Catho* (Westminster, 1476/7, 1477, 1481/2). William Caxton, *The Book of Curtesye* (Westminster, 1477/8). William Caxton, *Book of the Knight of the Tower* (Westminster, 1484). William Caxton, *Book of Good Manners* (Westminster, 1487).

51 Caxton, *Book of Curtesye*, p. 1<sup>r</sup>. Caxton is playing upon familiar concepts of genre within the title. David R. Carlson has suggested that Caxton: 'used the prologues and epilogues he wrote to foster demand, like twentieth-century blurbs' ('Chaucer, Humanism, and Printing:

Morality or virtue is a symbolically interesting idea because it is a value that is theoretically open to all people and ages and is not dependent on an inherited class in a way that knowledge of manners and protocol can be. For non-noble audiences, the focus on morality as opposed to lineage, would have served as a way to participate in elite society. *Parvus Cato* incorporates a discussion of class and morality as a tool for grappling with the question of identity. Against the conventional *topoi* established within earlier courtesy literature, it subversively argues that grace, wisdom and eloquence can be found in anybody, that ‘poure folks’ can be wise and that a servant can have great sapience.<sup>52</sup> It continues by saying that: ‘vertu is hid under many an habit vile’.<sup>53</sup> This subtext develops the idea that the inherent moral and virtuous traits in a person take precedence over overt manners. Identifying virtue in servants and the poor does not prevail over the separation of people into their predesignated estates. This is not encouraging anyone to look beyond and disregard class origins and status but rather to recognize that even ‘the poure folks’ may sometimes be given wisdom and that virtue (note it is not saying good manners) may be hidden within the most (socially) unlikely candidates. A warning is also given to children and young people over the danger of valuing self-importance and pedigree over conscience: ‘And in effect yf thyn astate be hye | Though favel with his crafte wil bli[n]de thin eye | In al thy lyf thou neuer geue credence | More to thy self than to thy conscience’.<sup>54</sup> While *Parvus*

Conditions of Authorship in Fifteenth-Century England’, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 64 (1995), 274–88 (p. 280). I would argue that by using familiar language in the titles he was also pre-empting demand in his market. Even before the poem proper, the potential (buying) audience would have understood the reference to ‘courtesy’ and the literary heritage this had played in the instruction of children in previous generations.

- 52 This concept was discussed in other forms of medieval texts and was not necessarily a discussion, or an indication of a change, unique to these didactic texts and their audiences. It does however encroach upon narratives of identity, gestures and hierarchy established within earlier courtesy material and provides an additional perspective to audiences.
- 53 William Caxton, *Paruus Cato Magnus Cato*, p. cvii<sup>v</sup>. Only the third edition of 1481/2, is paginated, making it difficult to accurately give references to earlier editions. All quotations and page numbers therefore refer to the third edition. ‘Habit’ in this context during this period could mean the clothing and garments worn particularly relating to rank and profession; a more abstract conceptual reference to bearing, behaviour, and demeanour; or the mental and moral constitution of a person; or used in reference to the dwelling place of a person. Given the context I suspect the first three definitions would be the most relevant.
- 54 Caxton, *Paruus Cato Magnus Cato*, p. avi<sup>f</sup>. ‘Favel’ could mean the personification of cunning or duplicity.

*Cato* tries to safeguard some of the established hierarchical ordering of people into their predesignated occupations and positions, such as servants and ‘the poor’, the subtext is subverting the message most often found within courtesy poems by relating the idea that these poor folk and servants were now the possessors of virtue, wisdom, and wit. Granted, they likely would not know how to behave at a table or how to serve meat or drink – indeed they still are seen as having ‘many an habit vile’ – but identity and status now mean more than the knowledge of formal manners, appearance, or inherited social position. Virtue and grace are given to everyone and in the late fifteenth century children and parents reading didactic texts were taught how to take note of virtuous qualities and were having to learn that these inherent traits were increasingly important as a marker of behaviour.

The concern with moral identity in late-fifteenth-century didactic literature supports Marjorie McIntosh’s work looking at shifting concerns with misbehaviour in the English social environment. While moral reformation was once seen as a seventeenth-century phenomenon associated with puritanism,<sup>55</sup> McIntosh has convincingly argued that immorality and disorder were reported in the lesser courts in England from the mid-1300s and that particular concerns with the disorderly behaviour of younger people were entered into the records from the 1460s to 1470s onwards, a timeframe which fits neatly into the literary material emphasizing moral behaviour that Caxton was publishing contemporaneously. The non-elite audience the new household literature was addressing also corresponds to McIntosh’s analysis of the social makeup of those groups that were increasingly involved with social regulation at this time. McIntosh has credibly argued that it was the middling classes of yeomen, craftsmen, and prosperous tradesmen, as well as some gentry, who were directly involved with reporting and controlling misbehaviour at a local level, particularly through jurors’ presentments.<sup>56</sup> The likelihood that late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century printed books were also read by these same non-elite groups ties this moral literature to broader contemporary social concerns and illustrates the process whereby adult concerns and anxieties gradually made their way into the culture of childhood.

55 Martin Ingram, ‘Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England’, in Griffiths, Fox and Hindle, *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, Chapter 2. See, also, Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), Chapter 4, and Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525–1700, With a new postscript by Keith Wrightson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 186–220.

56 Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England: 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 2–8, 34–40.



This late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century nuclear family household literature used the specific environment and daily activities of the household to promote and regulate a moral/religious identity in children and young people. Richard Whitford's *The conte[n]tes of this boke. A werke of preparacion, unto communion, or howselyng* narrates the importance of gathering the household together at mealtimes as an opportunity for prayers and graces to be said, frequently by the children of the house. The authority of the father and less so of the mother, is used to describe the hierarchy and common organization of the house, particularly as it revolved around Catholic religious tutoring and observance of the Creed, the Pater Noster, and the Ave, which were the essential building blocks that began all religious instruction, and which have always been relevant to the instruction of children. The allocation of domestic duties in the household is also alluded to and the mother is shown as responsible for instilling discipline in her children. A short poem catalogues eleven types of bad behaviour supposedly seen as relevant to children and young people, including lying, stealing, cursing, scorning, fighting, and threatening someone, warranting corporal punishment.<sup>57</sup> The smooth and deeply religious running of the household was again based on the concomitant responsibility of parents to monitor and control the moral identity of their children, emphasizing their role in teaching both children and servants the formula for religious activities as well as punishing indiscretions. While religion is a dominant theme in the book, the domestic environment is not neglected and is invoked through the repetition of the word 'household'. The term 'householder' can be seen as a substitute for the word 'father' in this text. Throughout the book, it is the father who is predominantly the figure who receives the lessons and advice on how to raise his children, with the children themselves removed from most if not all active participation. Take for instance the instruction to the father – 'Than must you teche them to knowe by ordre the preceptes or co[m]maundementes of

57 Richard Whitford, *The conte[n]tes of this boke. A werke of preparacion, or of ordinaunce vnto co[m]munion, or howselyng. The werke for housholders with the golden pistle and alphabete or a crosrowe called an A.B.C. all duely corrected and newly prynted* (London: Robert Redman, 1531), p. Cvii'. The responsibility of mothers to discipline their children remained fairly constant in both the English and American experience from the early medieval period to the early twentieth century. Of the some dozen examples that Colin Heywood has compiled which show parents punishing their children, the examples are fairly evenly split between fathers and mothers. Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp. 98–102.

god/the names of the .vii. princypall synnes'.<sup>58</sup> This activity is centred upon the father as the arbitrator of moral/religious behaviour, much as it was in Harleian MS 787.

The role of children in the family is introduced by looking at the question of age as a time of learning. Whitford suggests that religious and moral lessons should begin as soon as children can speak. Unlike the guides for manners and protocol that could imply a reasonable degree of mental sophistication, or *Stans puer ad mensam* and Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* which would have been aimed at those at least in the *pueritia* stage, lessons of morality were seen as necessary for all ages: 'Unto some craftes or occupacions a certayne age is required in chylder/but vertue and vyce may be lerned in euery age.'<sup>59</sup>

It appears that there were two parallel streams of didactic literature circulated to households between 1400 and 1600, with moral literature gradually edging out its courtesy counterpart by the sixteenth century.<sup>60</sup> However courtesy-infused values and rules continued to play a distinctive part in the social education of children and there continued to be an associated literature which incorporated lessons about manners and protocol into the moral upbringing and activities of children and particularly of young servants. Hugh Rhodes' *The book of nurture, for men, servants and children*, was published first in 1545 and blends the two household audiences together; that is, it discussed both the nuclear family household and the

58 Whitford, *The conte[n]tes of this boke*, pp. Bvi<sup>r</sup>–Bvii<sup>r</sup>.

59 Whitford, *The conte[n]tes of this boke.*, p. Bii<sup>r</sup>. Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, suggests that character especially in girls, could be formed from infancy through the moral character and behaviour of the wet nurse.

60 Of the sixteenth-century texts I have looked at, many are more concerned with the moral character of children and young people, often combined with religious instruction, than with superficial or courteous behaviour. For instance Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman* discussed the identity of women from the time of infancy in terms of virtue, chastity and sexual purity. Ulrich Zwingli's *Certayne Precepts* was likewise concerned with virtuous behaviour. Ulrich Zwingli, *Certeyne precepts, gathered by Hulrichus Zuinglius, declaring howe the ingenious youth ought to be instructed and brought vnto Christ. Translated out of latin into English by master Richard Argentyne Doctour in Physyck* (Ipswich: Anthony Scoloker, 1548). Thomas Salter's, *A mirrhor mete for all mothers, matrons, and maidens, intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie*, published in 1579, pondered conduct in terms of moral behaviour as did a second translation in 1598, published as *The necessarie, fit, and conuenient education of a yong gentlewoman*. Moral literature was not confined to women's conduct alone. *A president for parentes* (1571) was based on moral instruction for young men, as was Robert Shelford's 1596 book, *Lectvres or readings upon the 6 verse of the 22 chapter of Prouerbs, concerning the vertuos education of youth*.

household where children or youths worked as servants. In this way it combined the preoccupation with manners and service with lessons on the moral identity of children and young people. Rhodes' book introduces the nuclear family household by looking at the role of parents in fostering a suitable home environment for children. This integrated dual religious and social instruction, including how children should know the appropriate religious prayers and graces to use, how children should dress in the morning and how children should be taught to show their parents respect. It also mentions sending children to school: 'yf ye put them to scole away from you, se ye put them to a dyscrete mayster'<sup>61</sup> which sets up the premise of non-working children of at least seven years of age living in or coming home to the family. Part of the instructions that these children within the nuclear family home are receiving borrows heavily from the older canon of protocol and courteous behaviour, including practical instructions on brushing clothes down in the morning, washing faces and hands, blowing the nose, and tidying one's room, suitable lessons for both younger and older children:

Or thou thy chambre passe/purge thy nose & make it cleane  
 Of fylthy thynges backe & bely/ye knowe what I meane  
 Sponge & brusshe thy clothes clene/that y[ou] shalte on were  
 Cast up your bed/and take hede ye lefe none of your gere  
 Make clene thy shoes/combe thy heed/ & manerly the brace  
 Se thou forget not/to wasshe bothe thy handes and face.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, Rhodes establishes these good manners as a means of fostering virtue in children: 'for youth is dysposed to take suche as they are

61 Hugh Rhodes, *The Boke of nurture for men, seruantes and chyldren, with Stans puer ad mensam, newly corrected, very vtyle and necessary vnto all youth* (London: Thomas Petyt, 1545), p. Aiii<sup>r</sup>. This was reprinted in 1560 (twice), 1568, 1570 (imperfect), and 1577, seemingly making it one of the most popularly circulated texts in a relatively narrow timeframe. The mention of formal education along with the type of activities the servants are expected to perform and the comment: 'To helpe a preest to say masse/it is greatly to be co[m]mended', are all pertinent to the activities of boys and not girls (p. Aiii<sup>v</sup>). This comment has been removed from later editions of the book, reflecting the onset of Protestant reform and the change in official policy regarding the Catholic mass. It is interesting to speculate that the relatively simple removal of certain sentiments meant a text could be translated into the new Protestant era, perhaps suggesting that many of the philosophies relevant in the social upbringing of children were based on 'generic' values and virtues.

62 Rhodes, *Boke of nurture*, 1545 edn, Aiii<sup>r-v</sup>. And in all subsequent editions.

accustomed in/good or euyl'.<sup>63</sup> This introduces three elements to the reader. The first sees practical behaviour and manners elevated. The second sees the domestic environment where these activities take place directly referred to, and the third connects these to a commentary on virtue. In later editions of the book, additional passages on youths going into service are included, incorporating advice on serving at tables and getting one's master ready for bed.<sup>64</sup> These guidelines are far more specific to particular duties and move beyond the generic guidelines for children at home, and probably related to slightly older children within the *pueritia* or *adolescentia* stage. To an extent, these later instructions should contradict what has been established for children living at home with parents. However the text circumvents the potential friction between the two philosophies by cleverly introducing the importance of good manners and practical instructions for children at home, before introducing the working environment of service. In this way, obedience to others, either parents or masters, is equally promoted, as is observing hierarchy and acting honourably. This circumvents the functional differences of children in the two households. In order to accomplish this, Rhodes has borrowed ideas and images from the earlier courtesy canon and rearranged them to suit the attitude of family life and moral upbringing with which readers were becoming increasingly familiar in the sixteenth century. In this way, manners and protocol were blended back into a family household literature, with the provision that the text now also had to have an extra dimension to it, which talked about virtue and vices and the moral identity of those children.

Didactic literature circulating between 1400 and 1600 demonstrates that children did participate in two discrete household structures and that there were two at times quite different genres of didactic literature that related to children in these environments. The early preoccupation with establishing a coherent set of practical manners to follow in everyday life, along with the associated autonomy that was a part of children's activities slowly transforms into a culture where children's authority is subordinated to parental control and where the moral identity of children becomes increasingly prominent. However the importance of adhering to prescribed sets of approved behaviour, which is particularly relevant for child servants, does not entirely disappear, and sixteenth-century literature does borrow from the ideas and images about courteous behaviour and protocol previously

63 Rhodes, *Boke of nurture*, 1545 edn, p. Aiii, r. And also in all subsequent editions.

64 These are: 'The maner of seruing a knight, squier, or gentleman' and 'Howe to ordre your maisters chamber, at night to bedwarde' (Rhodes, *Boke of nurture*, 1560, 1568, 1570, and 1577).

established in literary culture. Later sixteenth-century books that incorporated this into their narrative structures did so in a way which ensured that it corresponded to the progressively more powerful forces of parental responsibility, moral identity, and the increasing significance of the nuclear family household in the culture and literature of childhood.

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