Senses of obligation in eighteenth-century England: language, culture and behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The language of obligation was ubiquitous in eighteenth-century writing. References to obligation, duty, being obliged or being obliging were very widespread, with nearly 90% of eighteenth-century printed works utilising this language at least once; on average, it occurred around 20 times in each text. Such occurrences were more frequent than references to family, God, money, death, honour, trust, politeness or various other terms that communicated values and attitudes. Indeed, among the very many terms tested for this study, only references to love and friendship occurred more frequently.

This thesis demonstrates that the language of obligation was a particular feature of eighteenth-century English discourse, exploring the many meanings that these terms could take, how they were used both to discuss moral, cultural and social issues but also to oil the wheels of social exchange, each use implying the bonds that tied people together. It suggests that this language reflected both a growing emphasis on the importance of interpersonal and social relationships and an increasing interest in the responsibilities and benefits of communal society.

The second focus of the thesis concerns how language meaning and use can be studied, particularly whether such historical enquiries can be conducted with sufficient rigour to yield reliable findings. It employs a mode of scepticism that seeks not only to illustrate a hypothesis but also to determine the representativeness of the studied behaviour within its historical context, scrutinising its research methodology at each stage. By applying computational linguistics to a large and comprehensive corpus of eighteenth-century texts, the study effectively 'opinion polls' eighteenth-century society to generate detailed data about how the language of obligation was used and the wide range of nuanced meanings that it took. These data allow hypotheses to be formulated about attitudes and opinions which are then critically examined using the traditional approaches of cultural and social history.

The thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the meanings of obligation in eighteenth-century writing and provides a significant insight into how obliged and obliging behaviour was understood and experienced in everyday life.

Access Condition and Agreement

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

A key phrase occurs frequently in this thesis, 'the language of obligation'. In the early chapters, the phrase is used in a narrow sense to describe the word family consisting of *obligation* and *duty* in their various grammatical forms. In the more discursive later chapters, the phrase is used to encompass both this meaning and a broader meaning which includes the various words and actions people employed as they thought about and acted out their obligations, whether or not they used those precise terms. The context of the phrase will always make it clear which meaning is intended.

When individual words or word families are described, the lexeme encompassing all forms and meanings is capitalised, so that OBLIGE or OBLIGATION includes all forms of the word family (*oblige, obliged, obligation, etc*). Italics are used to indicate a particular grammatical form so that, for example, *oblige* excludes references to *obliged*. The final part of chapter 2 discusses word vectors and an additional notation is used. A vector space is rendered in bold italics as ***<oblige>*** whilst an individual vector node is shown in plain font surrounded by single quotes thus: 'oblige'. Normal font is used when the word is being used in its usual sense, as in "they wrote in very warm general terms of their obligations towards family".

Early eighteenth-century works tended to capitalise nouns and this has been preserved in quotations. However, the practice of adding emphasis by the use of italics has not been maintained since, to modern eyes, it can interfere with the flow of the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Overview

When Martin Lister accompanied the Earl of Portland on his embassy to France in 1698 he was warmly welcomed by the intellectuals of Paris, recording his reception through the language of obligation. He wrote that Monsieur Dacier and his Lady were "two very obliging Persons", l'Abbe de Brillac "very obligingly offered to carry me to the Kings Library", the Marshall "very obligingly embraced me, and saluted me with a Kiss, and followed it with very kind and familiar Discourse". Many of his contacts gave him presents of scientific curiosities. "Monsieur Budelot "had an Antick Busto […] of which he very obligingly gave me a Copy", Monsieur Buco "very obligingly lent me those [shells] I had not seen, to have the designs of them done", Friar Plumier "in a most obliging manner granted me" a copy of drawings of shells, and Monsieur Merrie "obligingly procured for me, the Heart of a Human Embrio, with the Lungs intire" so that they could together perform experiments on the flow of liquid through its four chambers.[1]

Lister was far from alone in describing his encounters through the language of obligation. Obliged and obliging behaviour were central to the themes of many sentimental novels. Samuel Richardson used the various grammatical forms of OBLIGATION 199 times and DUTY 76 times in his novel *Pamela* (1740) and Charlotte Lennox made obligation the organising theme of her novel *The Female Quixote* (1752), documenting the heroine's mental battle between duty to her father's dying wish and the obligations of her heart.[2] Moral duty was also an important element of much of Daniel Defoe's non-fiction and he penned many advice books in which he combined practical advice with ethical exhortation in subjects as diverse as trade, courtship, family life, gentlemanly conduct, the management of servants, and the marriage bed.[3] Other authors also employed this language of obligation and, even if the subject matter was not itself ripe for description in terms of obliged or obliging behaviour, their dedicatory prefaces were very likely to be couched in such terms.

Almost any eighteenth-century publication would contain at least one mention of obligation or duty in its various forms. For example, around 87% of the 185,000 texts contained in the

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[1] Martin Lister, *A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1699), pp. 75, 104, 207, 49–50, 57, 74, 69–70, along with 12 other references to obligation.

[2] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (London: T. Kinnersley, 1816); Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote: The Adventures of Arabella...* (London: A. Millar, 1752).

[3] A number of Defoe's advice books will be referenced including *The Compleat English Tradesman I and II*, ed. by John McVeagh, 2 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007); *Religious Courtship ...*, 2nd edn (London: E. Matthews and others, 1729); *The Family Instructor* (London: Eman. Matthews, 1715); and *The Compleat English Gentleman*, ed. by Karl D. Bulbring (London: David Nutt, 1890).

Eighteenth Century Collections Online contain at least one mention of obligation or duty - on average there were around 21 occurrences in each text.[4] This is a surprisingly frequent incidence rate for a term that has been little discussed by historians, particularly since eighteenth-century writers were much more likely to refer to obligation in its various forms than most other terms used by historians to discuss eighteenth-century attitudes - it occurs more frequently than references to FAMILY, GOD, MONEY, DEATH, HONOUR, TRUST, POLITENESS or various other terms that communicated values and attitudes. Indeed, among the very many terms tested, only references to love and friendship occurred more frequently.[5] At the core of this project is an attempt to understand this obliging tendency in eighteenth-century popular discourse.[6]

There has, however, been a second theme to this project concerning how such questions might be investigated to ensure that sufficient confidence can be attached to their outcomes. Dror Wahrman claims in a 2008 essay that "Cultural historians are sometimes prone to generalisations beyond the limits of their evidence", his particular target being those historians who, like himself, are concerned with "big picture cultural history" rather than those who explore the microhistories of particular events or individuals.[7] He argues that, because cultural history focuses on meanings and significations, it is not amenable to quantification so that the search for typicality and representativeness becomes problematic, making attempts at general statements drawn from limited or unrepresentative sources open to question. His article, a partial reworking of the introduction to his 2004 book on identity, suggests a solution to the problem of representativeness which will be examined shortly.[8] However, the subtitle to his essay poses a rather more intriguing and important question *Can Cultural History Be Rigorous?* His paper does not fully answer that question but suggests one approach that can be *more* rigorous. A central objective of my thesis is to demonstrate that synoptic cultural history can be both qualitative and quantitative, interpretive

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[4] 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online Parts 1 and 2 (2010-2013) - JISC Collections' <https://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Catalogue/FullDescription/index/922> [accessed 6 March 2018]. JISC's Historical Collections were withdrawn from 31 July 2024. However, similar searches to those used in this thesis can be carried out using Gale's 'Early English Books Online' and 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online'; 'ECCO-TCP: Eighteenth Century Collections Online - Text Creation Partnership', 2010 <https://textcreationpartnership.org/> [accessed 15 March 2014].

[5] These results derive from a detailed analysis of the ECCO-TCP subset of Eighteenth Century Collections Online and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

[6] Many of the ideas for this project were first explored in a Master's dissertation, Maurice Brenner, 'Understandings of Obligation in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1765' (unpublished MA Dissertation, Queen Mary University of London, 2014). However, the datasets, scope and rationale of the discussion and the methodologies employed have been much extended.

[7] Dror Wahrman, 'Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History Be Rigorous?', *Gender & History*, 20.3 (2008), 584–602 (p. 584).

[8] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

and rigorous, and this will be done through the detailed worked example of eighteenth-century attitudes to obliged and obliging behaviour in both discourse and social action.

Starting points

One defining feature of the early eighteenth century was the rapidly expanding opportunity for social communication.[9] In the course of this thesis, we will consider multiple examples of communal engagement including social visiting, theatre-going and letter-writing as well as involvement with work, parish, church and charitable activities, but one factor which greatly influenced social attitudes was the unprecedented expansion and variety of the printed word.[10] The abolition of press censorship and significant reduction in central controls on printing witnessed a burgeoning of publications. For example, by 1704 an estimated 44,000-46,000 newspapers were printed each week and essay journals also became avidly read - during the single year of 1714, some 23 different journal titles were published in London often selling between 8,000 and 12,000 copies per issue, with the most popular being distributed nationally.[11] It also provided the opportunity for many more authors to seek an audience for their ideas in a variety of print forms from cheap chapbooks sold at street corners to the more expensive full-form novels, reference books and didactic materials that were distributed through networks of booksellers (discussed in later chapters).

Much of this printed material survives and provides an invaluable source - Michael Suarez estimates that only around 10% of titles published in the eighteenth century have now been lost.[12] The most typical approach adopted by social and cultural historians is to explore individual works or select groups of texts that illustrate certain tendencies or behaviours. However, by taking the archive as a whole and treating it as a large and representative record, it is also possible to discern what ideas and attitudes preoccupied the majority of eighteenth-century writers. This research began as an investigation of words that communicated values and attitudes in eighteenth-century writing by exploring how often such terms occurred in the written corpus, providing an indication

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[9] See, for example, Brian Cowan, '"Restoration" England and the History of Sociability', in *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. by Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), pp. 7–24.

[10] For its impact on popular political debate, see Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 12–13.

[11] Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 12, 104–6; 'Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection', *Gale Primary Sources* <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/17th-and-18th-century-burney-newspapers-collection> [accessed 16 April 2020].

[12] Suarez takes his data from the ESTC which includes all books published in Great Britain and its colonies and works published abroad in English. Michael F. Suarez, 'Towards a Bibliometric Analysis of the Surviving Record, 1701–1800', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5: 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 37–65 (pp. 40, 41).

of their relative conceptual usefulness to the eighteenth-century mind. Unsurprisingly, references to God, religion, family, honour, nationhood, and life events such as birth, marriage and death were common. However, one set of words concerning obliged, obliging and dutiful behaviour occurred particularly frequently and this came as a surprise since it is not referenced as a common eighteenth-century idea in any of the literature. These terms appeared with such frequency in printed matter of all kinds that they were more common than any other value-expressive term I have tested with the exception of references to friends and to love.[13]

Exploration of this language of obligation forms the main body of the thesis which will discuss the meanings given to these terms, the contexts in which they were used and what this tendency to refer to *being obliged* and *being obliging* might tell us about social and personal relationships and attitudes in the first half of the eighteenth century. The second part of the Introduction will look in detail at how the discussion will be approached. However, to understand its methodology we first need to return to the question posed earlier: *Does rigour have a place in interpretative studies of past cultures?*

Problems of Interpretation

Cultural historians face twin challenges in interpreting the attitudes of past authors. The first concerns historical meaning, whether we understand the connotations that key words held for people in the past, and the second concerns representativeness, whether the sources and situations we are exploring and therefore the conclusions we reach are typical of the period. The research on which this thesis is based addresses these problems directly and develops an approach which reduces the risks entailed.

By necessity, therefore, this Introduction discusses the overarching problem of meaning and representativeness in historical writing and how various scholars have provided partial solutions. It will then suggest how a merging of these approaches and tools can provide a relatively straightforward strategy to help prevent errors of interpretation. The second part of the Introduction then outlines how this strategy has been applied to the study of obligation.

Before beginning those discussions, we will consider two examples which illustrate the pitfalls that historians can encounter.

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[13] A full list of the terms tested is provided in Chapter 1, Table 1.

Example 1: Kingly fabric?

A recent article has discussed the visual imagery of Alan Ramsay's coronation portrait of King George III (1760-61, Figure 1).[14] The author describes the portrait as an embodiment of British nationhood, suggesting that Ramsay had intended to give flesh to a view of government that the new King had previously set out in a series of constitutional essays. The then Prince George had argued that the post-1688 settlement and the Act of Union had created a unified system of government in which all parts moved in harmony, forming what he termed "this mighty fabric". The article discusses how Ramsay had used the portrait's imagery to represent these views, for example how the shape of the king's robes mimics the outline of England whilst the crown and jewels (the trappings of monarchic power) are de-emphasised. The organising theme of the article reflected in its title emphasises a third aspect concerning the fabric of the gown since Ramsay brings the King's clothing to the fore so that it dominates the portrait, becoming a visual representation of the constitution as a binding 'fabric'.[15]

Figure 1: Allan Ramsay, *George III*, 1760-61

Source: Royal Collection

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[14] Robert Paulett, '"This Mighty Fabric": Allan Ramsay, British Union, and the Body of the King', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45.2 (2022), 239–57.
[15] Paulett, '"This Mighty Fabric"', p. 246.

This visual pun, associating the young king's view of the institutions of government with the fabric of his clothing, is a plausible argument given the eighteenth-century taste for complex visual imagery.[16] However, the pun does require the audience to understand both senses of *fabric* so that it encompasses both government and cloth. Yet my analysis of eighteenth-century uses of the term suggests that they would not: a survey of the 615 texts contained in the ECCO-TCP corpus which were written in the 1760s and 1770s has produced no example where *fabric* is used as a synonym for cloth or material although it contains many references to fabric in its sense of a structure. Contemporary dictionaries also do not support the argument. For example, in its article on buildings, Ephraïm Chamber's 1728 *Cyclopaedia* describes the fabric of a building not in terms of its materials (wood, stone or brick) but as its "Foundation, Walls, Apertures, Compartitions, and Cover", whilst Samuel Johnson in his 1755 *Dictionary* gives two definitions for *fabric*: "a building or edifice" and "any system or compages of matter; any body formed by the conjunction of dissimilar parts".[17] It is clearly this latter sense that the young Prince George had employed when he described the constitution of Britain as "this mighty fabric" meaning a 'mighty system' or 'mighty edifice'; and the absence of any contemporary uses of fabric to mean cloth implies that Ramsay could therefore not have intended the suggested pun. The organising theme and argument of the article are therefore called into question.

Example 2: Polite confusion?

Over the last thirty years, social and cultural historians have successfully drawn 'politeness' as permeating social interactions in eighteenth-century society, at first structuring the behaviour of the Better Sort and then becoming adopted by the established Middling Sort. Initially described by Lawrence Klein as a "master metaphor" for the expectation and visions of decorous gentlemanly sociability, it was extended by Paul Langford among others to be "a key word, with a meaning and implications that open doors into the mentality of a period" so that it became "That *je ne sais quoi* which distinguished the innate gentleman's understanding of what made for civilized conduct".[18]

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[16] Extensively captured, for example, in the descriptions of eighteenth-century prints in the British Museum print catalogue. See Frederic George Stephens and Edward Hawkins, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (Volume IV) 1761-70* (London: Chiswick Press, 1883).

[17] Ephraïm Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, Or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences...*, 2 vols (London: James and John Knapton [and others], 1728); Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language 1755*, ed. by Brandi Besalke, Digital Edition, 2 vols (London: J & P Knapton [and others], 2012). Johnson defines compages as a "system of many parts united".

[18] Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 8; Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 12 (2002), 311–31 (pp. 311–12); and *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 7.

Politeness is also seen as conditioning gender relationships. Amanda Vickery describes it as "a tool which a well-born woman could use to extend her reach … to demand social consideration and to justify criticism when this was denied" and Philip Carter sees politeness as an "explicitly innovative concept of social refinement" which redefined manliness.[19] Politeness is also seen as governing everyday activities: for example, Helen Berry considers that, for the middling and upper sorts, "polite shopping rituals framed the social experience of consumption as an everyday activity" and Janet Mullin sees "polite leisure" as "a new field of action for commercial and professional people".[20] The reach of politeness discourse has become so widespread that a recent work was able to say that

> politeness has come to be known as the key concept in understandings of a variety of aspects of the British eighteenth century. It is not only one of the central idioms of eighteenth-century culture, but it has also served as an important analytical category in historical studies of the eighteenth century.[21]

In all, around 9,740 articles referencing eighteenth-century British politeness have been published since 1990 and, of these, politeness is explicitly mentioned in the titles of around 170 articles, 127 books and 13 theses.[22]

Since politeness is seen as a defining trope of eighteenth-century middling and gentry society, we should expect to see it regularly referenced in plays, novels, conduct literature and journal essays of the period, and that scholarly studies would have been carried out to assess its reach into eighteenth-century society. Yet such a simple question does not appear to have been tested, although Philip Carter does acknowledge that the particular epithet 'polite society' "appears to have been seldom applied in eighteenth-century commentaries".[23] As will be demonstrated in Chapter 1, where a wide range of terms considered by historians as culturally significant are examined for the frequency with which they were used in eighteenth-century works, *polite/politeness* was one of the least frequently mentioned when compared with, for example, *love, obligation, honour, religion, happiness, liberty, trust* or *sentiment*. Even among the relatively few occurrences of

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[19] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London: Yale Note Bene, 2003), p. 20; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 1.
[20] Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 12 (2002), 375–94 (p. 378); Janet E. Mullin, '"We Had Carding": Hospitable Card Play and Polite Domestic Sociability among the Middling Sort in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History*, 42.4 (2009), 989–1008.
[21] Soile Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power*, Routledge Studies in Eighteenth-Century Cultures and Societies (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), p. 1.
[22] 'EBSCOhost', *University of East Anglia Library* <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/> [accessed 26 April 2024]; 'JISC Historical Texts' <http://historicaltexts.jisc.ac.uk/> [accessed 16 April 2024]. Count limited to texts in which polite* is mentioned anywhere in the text but synonyms for 'eighteenth century' and "England" are mentioned only in the title, subject terms or summary/abstract.
[23] Carter, *Polite Society*, pp. 15, 17.

polite/politeness, more than 80% occurred in the second half of the century not the earlier decades that have been the focus of many articles including Lawrence Klein's initial papers. Even then, most of these uses have the meanings of *polite* given in Johnson's Dictionary of "glossy", "smooth", and "elegance of manners" rather than to imply a code of moral or sociable conduct.

It might be argued that *politeness* forms part of a semantic field of similar words and that its use by historians is simply a shorthand to represent such a cluster. Indeed, Klein has suggested that the term is associated with "a vocabulary of key words (such as 'refinement', 'manners', 'character', 'breeding', and 'civility')".[24] These words do occur frequently in the corpus (36,000 times in all, with *character* and *manners* both dwarfing references to politeness – 24,000 times and 9,000 times respectively). However, the inclusion of these terms in the 'politeness cluster' should be treated with caution since they carried a wide diversity of meanings and usages, only some of which could be said to have contributed to a language of politeness in the sense of a code of moral and social conduct. The major uses were references to positive personal characteristics; for example, a quarter of occurrences of *character* in ECCO-TCP are preceded by a possessive noun (*eg* 'Mr Smith's character') or pronoun (*eg* 'her own character') in such formulations as "in his character he is an honourable lad" or "nobody held that lady's character in higher esteem". In any case, the nearly 10,000 scholarly papers mentioned above were directly referencing the terms *polite* or *politeness*, not these alternative terms.

It appears then that these many researchers have been mining a small but very rich seam within the eighteenth-century archive which may not accurately represent its whole terrain, potentially drawing incomplete conclusions about the dominance of this particular trait. This is not necessarily to suggest that politeness was not a significant factor in at least some aspects of eighteenth-century social interaction or that a wider vocabulary may have made a significant contribution, only that the case has not been sufficiently well made. Possibly, like Gareth Stedman Jones' 1983 explanation of the vocabularies of class then being employed in historical debate, politeness has similarly acted as "a congested point of intersection between many competing, overlapping or simply differing forms of discourse".[25] It might, for example, be helpful to recast the discussion in terms of its component parts, associated concepts such as *manners* or *complaisance*,

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[24] Lawrence E. Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *Historical Journal*, 32.3 (1989), 583 (p. 583).
[25] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 2.

both of which will be considered in chapter 5. At the very least, there should be recognition of politeness as a modern historical discourse rather than an eighteenth-century trope.

Examples such as these lead to questions about the historical method when applied to certain forms of cultural history and this study seeks to apply a more rigorous approach.

What does 'rigour' mean in the context of cultural history?

Any suggestion that rigour has a place in cultural history begs two questions: *how do I define cultural history?* and *what is being meant here by rigour*? Whilst multiple scholarly texts explain the various schools of thought and methodologies of cultural history, they tend not to focus on what it is or what it does.[26] For this study, I find useful William Sewell's neat encapsulation of the subject as the task of "understanding how people actually made sense of and grappled with [the] forces and constraints" in their lives; or, in other words, the exploration of the attitudes and behaviours of past societies.[27]

Turning to the second question, the term 'rigour' is little used in the humanities (other than in relation to curriculum design in American schools) but it is frequently employed in the sciences although, even in this usually very precise sphere, it is rarely well-defined. For example, a recent review of the use of the term in educational research found that "Every definition of rigor (as a criterion for good quality research) we found was vague, using words that are open to a wide range of interpretation", with most references simply implying adherence to a standard systematic method.[28] Such definitions are very limiting, especially in a qualitative field such as cultural history where systematic methods are often seen as inappropriate. Whilst the body of this thesis does employ specific methodologies to overcome problems of interpretation and representation, it is not my intention to propose a single system for synoptic cultural history. Rather, I am suggesting a different conception of rigour where the researcher adopts a mode of scepticism at every stage of the study, attempting not simply to exemplify a conjecture but to explore whether the research stands up to scrutiny, what might be termed a 'scepticism as to method'. This assesses questions such as what the cultural terms under consideration meant to their users, whether the selected sources are representative of the social groups being considered, the extent to which the approach

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[26] See, for example, *The New Cultural History*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989); Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Miri Rubin, 'What Is Cultural History Now?', in *What Is History Now?*, ed. by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 80–94.

[27] William Hamilton Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 40.

[28] Karin Priem and Lynn Fendler, 'Shifting Epistemologies for Discipline and Rigor in Educational Research: Challenges and Opportunities from Digital Humanities', *European Educational Research Journal*, 18.5 (2019), 610–21 (p. 611).

being adopted provides an effective test of the hypothesis and, most importantly, whether the sources and methods being employed are described with sufficient transparency that the research is replicable, that another researcher using similar sources and methods would obtain similar results. This is what Amir Baghdadchi has called 'living rigour' which, he says, "… is designed to be vulnerable … a kind of rigour that constructs things to be used, inspected, evaluated".[29]

There is, of course, much room in history-writing for interpretation - the arts of drawing conclusions, bringing together results to infer trends, and presenting new perspectives, but a rigorous approach requires the researcher to make clear the difference between analysis and interpretation, what we know and what we conjecture, and to acknowledge the limits of any inferences. This thesis combines a systematic sceptical analysis with the traditional methods of interpretation to produce more confident conclusions about one aspect of eighteenth-century life. Such an approach is hardly unknown in historical research and is a routine feature in social and economic studies (although, even here, Miles Fairburn suggests that it is rare for works of social history to explicitly set out and critically examine their methodology).[30] However, historians of culture generally consider their field to be unsuited to systematic methodologies and instead search out descriptive solutions which, on their own, cannot meet standards of rigour. My own interest in the challenges faced by cultural historians began with concerns about the use of sources.

Turning sources into evidence - a personal journey

As my interest in cultural history developed, I began noticing discrepancies similar to those in the examples described above in the work of those brave historians who attempt to describe general traits in past cultures. This led to a personal quest to understand the problem better, to find historians who had engaged with such problems of interpretation and to explore ways to minimise the risk of misrepresenting past meanings.

At heart, the problem of evidencing cultural history can be reduced to a series of unanswerable questions: what exactly did past writers mean by the words they used; how many examples of usage are enough to form general conclusions; do those examples describe the same idea or did it change over time, place or context; has the process of selection biased the conclusion; do counter-examples exist and what do they tell us; and so on. Keith Thomas seeks to overcome these challenges by quoting extensively from the sources " … so liberally that at times my text comes close to being a collage of quotations" although he adds that he is "well aware of the perils that

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[29] Amir Baghdadchi, 'On Academic Boredom', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 4.3 (2005), 319–24 (p. 323).
[30] Miles Fairburn, *Social History: Problems, Strategies, and Methods* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 3–5.

beset source-miners and quotation-mongers" in drawing their examples very widely - in the case of his *The Ends of Life*, he ranges across 250 years and all levels of society.[31] However, Thomas's methods have their critics. Ludmilla Jordanova, for example, accuses him of piling "quotation upon quotation, example upon example, till we marvel at his erudition and feel compelled to step back and admire an ensemble which, when looked at too closely, only dazzles after a while".[32] It also leaves unanswered Thomas's personal nervousness about drawing conclusions based on extensive quotation, "Lacking any satisfactory method of quantifying these matters, all I can do is to record my impressions after long immersion in the period. I am well aware that other historians may have formed different impressions".[33] Such self-deprecating statements tend to reduce hard-earned scholarship to mere opinion and do not necessarily do justice to the conclusions reached. There is, however, a more fundamental problem with Thomas's approach since it relies on the personal amassing of vast quantities of examples gleaned from the archive over a lifetime of continuous annotation and cross-referencing.[34] That experience provides Thomas with an enviable range and depth of knowledge which is available to very few other scholars, and one part of my quest has been to find a quantification technique that can both substitute for Thomas's levels of erudition and provide a higher level of confidence in the conclusions reached. One such test will be applied to an example of Thomas's work in Chapter 3 which finds, at least in that case, that his methods do indeed stand up to scrutiny.

Jordanova further questions Thomas's approach because he draws selective examples of key terms from very disparate sources separated in time, motivation and purpose so that any conclusions cannot be considered as representing anything approaching a cogent argument about early modern attitudes. More fundamentally, she claims that collecting and presenting such usages treats sources at the most superficial level, assuming that the words on the page can speak for themselves. "Language is not transparent but opaque", she argues, and " to see through, or rather into it, is thus an act of interpretation", a process which she claims is absent from Thomas's work.[35] This approach has been problematised by Dror Wahrman as what he categorises as "the weak collage" view of history - the historian, noting a similar phenomenon in several settings, universalises it as a general descriptor of conduct or behaviour within the period or setting and

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[31] Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 4–6.

[32] L. J. Jordanova, 'The Interpretation of Nature: A Review Article', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29.1 (1987), 195–200 (p. 196).

[33] Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, p. 7.

[34] Keith Thomas, 'Working Methods', *London Review of Books*, 10 June 2010.

[35] Jordanova, 'Interpretation of Nature', pp. 196–99.

elevates it to what Wahrman terms a 'thing' - a cultural pattern that can be extrapolated from specific cultural settings to culture as a whole.[36] Whilst Thomas's approach is more nuanced than this, Wahrman attempts a solution to the general problem by being more methodical. He seeks repetitions of the phenomenon under consideration "across as many cultural, generic, and social boundaries as possible", an approach that bears examination.[37]

In *The Making of the Modern Self* (2006), Wahrman seeks to establish a thesis of a temporal shift across the eighteenth century from 'gender play' to 'gender panic' by applying his methodology across four cultural spheres of the theatre, fashion, classical translation and morality writing.[38] It is therefore worth exploring the limits of what Wahrman can achieve through this approach. He produces multiple examples of 'gender play' in the early century and of 'gender panic' in the late century, which may support a theory of change. However, he does not establish that these views were commonplace, or that there were no or fewer examples of the alternative position (gender panic in the early century and gender play in the late century), or that alternative interpretations might be available. Wahrman readily admits that his work raises "the old chestnuts of typicality and representativeness" which is usually accompanied by a call for quantification but, he claims, "as cultural historians know all too well, meanings and significations cannot for the most part be quantified".[39] This is a position that will be challenged shortly.

Wahrman thus does not fully answer the challenge of Jordanova's critique of those methods that draw conclusions based on large quantities of disparate examples; but her challenge can be met in two ways, both of which form major themes in this thesis. Firstly, word usage, when considered in bulk and explored and interpreted systematically, can yield very valuable information about past attitudes and reveal depths and breadths of meaning not previously recognised. Secondly, there is a false dichotomy in presenting the debate about the use of sources as one which pitches the search for "enough empirical instances to enable a valid generalisation to be made" against "the application of theoretical, interpretative methods to the sources in order to make them speak meaningfully to us".[40] We can consider key terms as carrying both surface *and* deep meanings, and we can consider them as both meaning-in-use *and* as subjects of critical interpretation - by taking both roads we can enrich the whole process of cultural history. The approach that forms the bulk of this thesis will provide a worked example in its discussion of

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[36] Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*, p. 45.
[37] Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*, p. 46.
[38] Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*, p. 47.
[39] Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*, p. 46.
[40] Jordanova, 'Interpretation of Nature', p. 198.

obligation, employing quantitative methods to reveal a very broad tapestry of meanings and uses to establish a reliable baseline and then subjecting that data to contextual examination through the application of the more traditional methods of cultural and social history. As we shall see, other historians also combine such qualitative and quantitative methods, but few subject their work to tests of representativeness and rigour and so avoid the criterion of 'scepticism as to method' suggested in this thesis.

Part I of what follows provides an account of the main influences that led me to develop this approach (broadly in the order in which they were met) and this is then followed in Part II by a description of how the resulting methodology is then applied in the main work of the thesis.

Part I: Developing the Methodology

Words and their past meanings

Naomi Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England* (2001) is rightly recognised as a major contribution to family studies, demonstrating that eighteenth-century understandings of the terms *family* and *friend* could carry very different connotations and emphases in comparison with modern usage.[41] However, whilst these findings are much quoted, very little attention has been given to the methods she used in her close examination of how these terms were treated in one diary, two novels and two conduct treatises, leading her to draw very different conclusions from those of previous studies. The usual approach in such research is to conduct a deep reading of the texts to focus on significant uses of the key terms - those extracts that appear to demonstrate most clearly what the writer had in mind, which Tadmor terms their 'text-content'. She rejects that approach as being too present-minded since it requires researchers to bring to the text their own interpretation of what is significant. Instead, Tadmor insists on collecting *every* mention of the key terms and then exploring their context in each case, for instance, noting who were the family or friends being referenced each time.[42] Her focus on the casual unconsidered uses of such terms reveals relationships and meanings unnoticed by previous researchers. She notes, for example, that Thomas Turner (a shopkeeper who kept a diary in the 1750s) made frequent references to his *family* attending church, even when none of the party was a blood or marital relation, demonstrating that, to Turner, 'family' was synonymous with 'household' rather than 'kin'.[43]

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[41] Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[42] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp. 10–13.
[43] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p. 25.

Tadmor's focus on the meanings given to words by the historical actors themselves (rather than relying on theory-based interpretations of their words) represented a watershed moment in my studies in its respect for the right of historical figures to their own interpretations of their attitudes and motives and it encouraged me to focus on what writers meant by the words that they chose to use. Her emphasis on considering every usage to reveal a diversity of meanings (what she terms their 'word-content'), and then testing the representativeness of those usages against other texts, also suggested to me how her approach might be more generalised now that computer-assisted research is more prevalent.

Understanding the choices made by historical authors

My new-found stress on understanding what historical actors were saying in their writing needed modification after encountering Quentin Skinner's arguments in his *Visions of Politics* (2002).[44] In this work, Skinner argues that the task of the historian of ideas is not to ask where a work such as Hobbes' *Leviathan* stands in the long history of ideas but rather to place it in its historical context to ask what urgent contemporary questions was the writer trying to address and who was he attempting to convince. This requires careful attention to the words chosen by the author, asking not only what he intended to say but what impact he intended that his words should have; Skinner reminds us that "whenever we use language for purposes of communication, we are always doing something as well as saying something".[45] In his many works, Skinner's primary interest has been on how certain key concepts such as *the state, republicanism* or *liberty*, have been understood by different historical writers and how the meanings they debated were specific to their particular contexts.[46] Indeed, he argues, new ideas generate a language of their own since "The clearest sign that a society has entered into the self-conscious possession of a new concept is … that a new vocabulary comes to be generated, in terms of which the concept is then articulated and discussed".[47] Skinner's focus on placing concepts in their specific contexts and identifying novel language uses meets Jordanova's challenge to interrogate and interpret usage, although his task is somewhat simplified because his concern is not with whole social groups but with individual writers

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[44] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). This work incorporates an earlier article in which many of these ideas had been rehearsed, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8.1 (1969), 3–53.

[45] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 2, but further developed in Chapter 6, 103-27.

[46] See, for example, Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol. 2, The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[47] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol. 1, The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. x.

and how they treated a particular idea at a given point in history. The task becomes more challenging if we attempt to recover more general understandings of a concept.

Words and concepts

Reinhart Koselleck led a major project to define key concepts relevant to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German political history. The outcome of this project was a nine-volume work (1972-97), its title translating as *Basic Concepts in History: A Historical Dictionary of Political and Social Language in Germany*, and it treats the meanings and conceptual history of some 120 key terms.[48] This was a very disciplined work with each definition following a similar pattern described in Koselleck's Introduction and then exemplified in his chapter on *Krise* (Crisis), these two articles between them setting out the rationale and methodology for the whole project.[49] The work was unavailable in the Anglophone world until relatively recently (and parts of it remain so) with *Crisis* appearing in English in 2006 and the *Introduction* in 2011, so that he and Skinner were unaware of each other's different approaches to the same general issue. Skinner reports that he began to become aware of Koselleck's work through a series of articles published by Martin Richter in 1986, 1987 and 1995.[50]

Koselleck reserves the term 'basic concepts' for a group of words that he considers to be key, those terms of social or political significance that "carry a great deal of conceptual baggage".[51] As he explains,

> Concepts are treated as more than meanings of terms that can be unambiguously defined. Rather political and social concepts are produced by a longterm semiotic process, which encompasses manifold and contradictory experiences. Such concepts may evoke complex, conflicting reactions and expectations. Obviously, a political and social concept with many facets derived from its past uses cannot be reduced to a simple basic idea.[52]

Koselleck thus distinguishes concepts from ordinary words. Ordinary words usually have fairly stable meanings that may change slowly over time but remain fairly unambiguous and capable of definition. Concepts, however, are multi-dimensional, gathering shades of meaning and emphasis over time, and they are culturally dependent - they are historically constructed through a long-term

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[48] *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe : historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, Studienausg, 9 vols (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004).

[49] Reinhart Koselleck, 'Introduction and Prefaces to the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe', trans. by Michaela Richter, *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 6.1 (2011), 1–37; Reinhart Koselleck, 'Crisis', trans. by Michaela W. Richter, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67.2 (2006), 357–400; for an overview of Koselleck's methods, see Jan Ifversen, 'About Key Concepts and How to Study Them', *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 6.1 (2011), 65–88.

[50] Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1*, pp. 177–78.

[51] Ifversen, 'About Key Concepts', p. 73.

[52] Reinhart Koselleck, 'A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe', in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. by Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, D.C: German Historical Institute, 1996), pp. 59–70 (p. 64).

process. Words can be defined but concepts must be interpreted. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary summarises the word *democracy* in around 230 words, yet it is a concept that is very differently construed and debated across the world.

The 'history of concepts' methodology as prescribed by Koselleck comprises four elements. Firstly, in order to understand the layers of meaning that a concept carries, its long-term history needs to be captured by reaching back into the classical world and tracing its shifting meanings up to the period under consideration. The understanding of the concept in the period being studied is then explored using three core elements: how it was defined in the reference works of the time, how it was debated by thinkers (intellectuals, economists, theologians *etc*) and finally how it was discussed in ordinary discourses, in the books, newspapers and journals read by ordinary people.[53] His approach therefore differs from Skinner's in that his focus is on how words were actually employed in everyday political discourse, using these revealed meanings to explore the wider context of political debate.

Skinner has distanced himself from Koselleck, stating that "there can be no histories of concepts; there can only be histories of their uses in argument", and he sees concepts as simply tools, and the focus of the historian should be on how those tools have been used in specific circumstances.[54] However, whilst Skinner's methods are well-suited to intellectual history with its interest in interpreting a given author's usually stable approach to a specific idea, they are inappropriate to Koselleck's project in which he catalogues how key concepts were often fluidly understood and used in a period of major political change.[55]

There is some commonality between Koselleck's political task and those of cultural historians but theirs are further complicated since both the interlocutors and the contexts in which the concepts were used become much more diverse: they have many more examples to contend with and there are usually more varied and nuanced usages across multiple genres. Historians are increasingly applying Koselleck's methodologies to cultural topics but with less emphasis on his first stage reaching back into the classical world, seeing it as less pertinent. However, these studies have tended to rely on the analysis of select texts and are therefore prey to the problems of selection

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[53] Koselleck, 'Introduction and Prefaces', p. 22.
[54] Quentin Skinner, 'A Reply to My Critics', in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. by James Tully (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 283.
[55] Koselleck, 'Introduction and Prefaces', p. 8.

rehearsed earlier.[56] It is therefore important to work towards models that explore meanings across large numbers of texts.

The power of linguistics

The challenge is essentially straightforward: how can ideas be explored across large numbers of texts in order to make general statements about meanings and uses. Phil Withington, writing in 2010, saw the difficulty in tracing how particular terms were appropriated in the past (in this case, *modern* and *society* between 1500 and 1700) and the impossibility of identifying all surviving uses. He therefore developed a proxy which examined how often and with which meanings those terms occurred on the title pages of published texts. Given the limitations of his method, he describes his work as "an *index* of usage rather than a fully comprehensive survey".[57]

However, this problem is not unique to historians, and methods initially developed by linguists are now in regular use by researchers in fields as varied as the health sciences, education, opinion mining, marketing and politics as well as in language studies.[58] Such studies often use questionnaires or interviews to test the attitudes and opinions of their subjects although, as Keith Thomas has noted, "The historian is in a much weaker position, for he cannot administer questionnaires or inkblot tests to the people of the past; many of their mental processes must forever remain hidden from him".[59] However, by subjecting large bodies of eighteenth-century writing to the same linguistic techniques, the historian has available something akin to a questionnaire which can provide routes into the study of naturally occurring instances of terms and the recovery of actual (often unconscious) usage. There are broadly two current approaches to computational linguistics: the first studies how a word behaves in sentences, the principal techniques being termed corpus linguistics, whilst the second, distributional semantics, employs machine learning techniques to look at the semantic relationship between the key word and other words that behave in similar ways. The very new technologies of Chat AI have emerged too late for consideration in this thesis, but they may quickly provide further tools for the exploration of eighteenth-century texts.

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[56] See, for example, Ute Frevert, *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[57] Philip Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), pp. 6–7.
[58] All these topics have featured in recent articles (as at 2022) published in the journal *Applied Corpus Linguistics* published by Elsevier.
[59] Keith Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. by Gerd Baumann, 1985 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 98.

Corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics employs a set of tools that seek out all occurrences of a word or phrase across a series of texts (*ie* a corpus).[60] The most common tool (Key Word in Context, *KWIC*) counts all occurrences of the key word and places them in their immediate contexts, displaying each instance within a pre-set number of words preceding and following it to expose the most frequent usages and associations; this is illustrated in Figure 2, an excerpt taken from an analysis of the uses of the word *patron* in one eighteenth-century collection. It is also possible to explore how often a term occurs close to others (for example, where *patron* occurs near terms linked to authorship or the theatre), to examine how occurrences of the term are distributed within or across texts, or to reveal co-occurrences where words appear with unexpected frequency close to the key word (called collocations). For example, the nouns most frequently collocating close to *patron* in this collection are *friend, lord, saint, duke, poet* and *author*, revealing meanings often overlooked.[61] More complex tools can distinguish between different grammatical forms or explore the emotional context of words through sentiment analysis.

Figure 2: A KWIC (Key Word in Context) analysis of *patron* in ECCO-TCP (excerpt)


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                 my Choice as it affords me so just a  Patron and gives me an Opportunity of somewhat acknowled
      should be received into the Protection of such a  Patron And I hope Future Times when they mean to
           was his and Knowledge to commend Of Arts a  Patron and of Want a Friend  Next came  Revenge  But
     s for you Gentlemen after having named that great  Patron and Pattern of Courage and Conduct in the Field
            to make St Francis who was before him his  Patron and to Mimick him in all his most ridiculous
    beginning of this Winter in Southwark as my old  Patron and your Grace's old Friend  Phoebus  pass'd
        gratify'd NOT far from this Saint Vincent the  Patron as I said before of this City has a
          was to deliver to the Bishop of Bangor his  Patron but it was lost among my other Things in
              'd to the World in the Choice of my  Patron But must depend on your known Candour for thus
            do me Justice as to the Choice of my  Patron but will I fear blame my rash Attempt in
      Life and Death and in sore Tribulation my old  Patron came to me by Night at the Time when
   r self which Qualities render you the most proper  Patron for the Author of these Essays  Thus far old
      Want tho' none the Cause suspects And hate their  Patron for their own Defects  Such none can please but
          too lit|tle of you my present most honoured  Patron give me leave Sir with the imputation of as
  ick which others bestow upon some one substantial  Patron he is for retailing among a Company of Actors
      aultsA first RateMinister of State was first your  Patron him you've commended to Excess since you've
     it has been constantly expected when like my old  Patron I should have gone under the Horizon for a
      the laudable Example of my old Friend and good  Patron in every wicked Contrivance the late Honourable M
       Chaplain to some great Man that a sin|gle  Patron may engross all the Merit Or if he happens
              in the Borough But quoth I to my old  Patron may I put his Grace in Mind of this
   ers Therefore Tu mihi Mecaenas Eris O BRAUND my  Patron my Pleasure my Pride disdain not to grace my
       ill becomes an Author who would be thought a  Patron of Liberty to suppose that Fathers are absolute w
        been the intimate Friend of Tasso and the great  Patron of Marino while they were living gives extraord
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Source: ECCO-TCP, analysed using AntConc concordancer

[61] '"You shall know a word by the company it keeps!"', John Firth, 'A Synopsis of Linguistic Theory 1930–1955', in *Studies in Linguistic Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), pp. 1–32 (p. 11).

These techniques are increasingly being applied to historical texts. In one of the first applications of a new search engine, Pumfrey *et al* (2012) used corpus methods to explore changes in the use of the terms *experiment* and *experimental* across the seventeenth century, Anthony McEnery and Helen Baker have looked at seventeenth-century prostitution (2016) and the poor (2017), and more recently Ruth Byrne (2020) has addressed the reporting of aliens and political refugees in nineteenth-century newspapers whilst John Regan (2021) has explored the use of the terms *beauty* and *beautiful* in the eighteenth century using word association. Historical topics are sometimes researched by scholars in other disciplines - the prolific evolutionary and cognitive social scientist Nicholas Baumard has written on topics as diverse as the scientific revolution (2020) and the cultural evolution of love (2022).[62]

Distributional semantics

In comparison to corpus linguistics, distributional semantic modelling (DSM, also referred to as word vector modelling) is both more complex and more problematic in terms of its interpretation. It uses machine learning programs to analyse not the texts themselves but models of the texts consisting of mathematical representations of the relationship between words in very large corpora. Their use requires at least some understanding of the concept of vector space and, at least currently, the ability to write enquiries in computer languages such as *Python* or *R*.[63] For this reason, they sit outside one of the aims of this thesis which is to suggest straightforward techniques that can be employed by historians wishing to evaluate their evidence base. However, these methods can reveal interesting information concerning the semantic behaviour of key cultural concepts and their use will be demonstrated in Chapter 2.

Unlike corpus linguistics which interacts directly with continuous text, DSM focuses on individual words and, in particular, 'the company they share' with other terms, emphasizing their

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[62] S. Pumfrey, P. Rayson, and J. Mariani, 'Experiments in 17th Century English: Manual versus Automatic Conceptual History', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 27.4 (2012), 395–408; Anthony McEnery and Helen Baker, *Corpus Linguistics and 17th-Century Prostitution: Computational Linguistics and History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); Antony McEnery and Helen Baker, 'The Poor in Seventeenth-Century England: A Corpus Based Analysis.', *Token: A Journal of English Linguistics*, 6 (2017), 51–83; John Regan, '"Beauty" and the "Beautiful": A Computational Analysis of the Company They Kept Across the Eighteenth-Century Corpus', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 79.1 (2021), 88–107; Ruth Byrne, '"Pauper Aliens" and "Political Refugees"', *A Corpus Linguistic Approach to the Language of Migration in Nineteenth-Century Newspapers* (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University, 2020); Benoît de Courson and Nicolas Baumard, *Quantifying the Scientific Revolution* (Hyper Article en Ligne - Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société, 14 December 2020); Nicolas Baumard and others, 'The Cultural Evolution of Love in Literary History', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6.4 (2022), 506–22.

[63] A vector space is a multi-dimensional mathematical construct representing a closed system containing vectors (elements specified by both size and orientation). Because a vector space is a closed system, operations on a vector produce another vector. For example, if the vectors represent words, the outcomes of an operation are other words in the same vector space. Thus, adding two terms together will produce other terms in that space, often revealing connections between the words or their interactions with other words.

semantic environment rather than their position in the text. Very large corpora are frequently used (for example, studies of contemporary English frequently use the currently 3 billion-word Wikipedia corpus or the 100 billion-word Google News corpus), and the approach relies on a substantial amount of automated pre-processing of the corpus using machine-learning techniques.[64] These firstly calculate the frequencies with which key words occur near other words (usually within 5 words on either side) and then plot these relationships in a multi-dimensional geometric space (frequently up to 1000 dimensions) so that the vector distance between each pair of words is proportional to their frequencies of co-occurrence.[65]

A few researchers have begun to apply word vector modelling to historical texts. Ryan Heuser produced an influential series of blogs in 2017, 'Word Vectors in the Eighteenth Century - Adventures of the Virtual' and his work is used as the basis for the analysis in Chapter 2.[66] More recently, Peter de Bolla has described a technique he terms 'Distributional Concept Analysis' which utilises a program also based on eighteenth-century texts.[67] However, his Cambridge Concept Lab (CCL) program, as of 2022, produces some unusual results.[68] For example, according to the CCL model, *duty/duties* had a semantic field in eighteenth-century usage limited to meanings connected with taxation whilst *dutiful/dutifully* was reserved for royal associations. These terms will be analysed in Chapter 2 using both corpus linguistics and word vector analysis and these methods demonstrate that *duty/duties* were rarely associated with taxation (less than 5% of the 18,000 occurrences in the ECCO-TCP corpus, mainly in the plural form *duties*), their most frequent uses being in contexts suggestive of obedience and obligation. Similarly, of the 1,000 occurrences of *dutiful/dutifully* only 5% were in association with royal terms but 24% occurred in connection with family terms. More generally, all forms of DUTY usually implied senses of affection and belonging rather than rank or tax. Clearly then, such vector modelling is still in its infancy, and outputs therefore need to be treated with caution both in framing any interpretation and in testing the

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[64] Andrei Kutuzov and others, 'Word Vectors, Reuse, and Replicability: Towards a Community Repository of Large-Text Resources', 2017, 271–76. Data obtained from their website, 'WebVectors: Models' <http://vectors.nlpl.eu/explore/embeddings/en/models/> [accessed 15 February 2023].

[65] Descriptions of distributional modelling are frequently very technical. For a good overview, see Cécile Fabre and Alessandro Lenci, 'Distributional Semantics Today Introduction to the Special Issue', *Traitement Automatique Des Langues*, 56.2 (2015), 7–20. For slightly more technical discussions, see Peter D. Turney and Patrick Pantel, 'From Frequency to Meaning: Vector Space Models of Semantics', *J. Artif. Int. Res.*, 37.1 (2010), 141–88; and Tomas Mikolov and others, 'Distributed Representations of Words and Phrases and Their Compositionality', in *Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems - Volume 2*, NIPS'13 (Red Hook, NY: Curran Associates Inc., 2013), pp. 3111–19.

[66] Ryan Heuser, 'Word Vectors in the Eighteenth Century – Adventures of the Virtual' <http://ryanheuser.org/word-vectors/> [accessed 3 April 2017].

[67] Peter De Bolla and others, 'Distributional Concept Analysis', *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 14.1 (2019), 66–92.

[68] 'Cambridge Concept Lab (CCL)' <https://concept-lab.lib.cam.ac.uk/> [accessed 5 December 2022].

technique, for example by comparing the results obtained from other techniques and also from qualitative studies to reference what is already known about the topic and period in question.

In summary, therefore, computational linguistics techniques have much to offer as exploratory tools. They offer a testbed for hypotheses to be evaluated, can provide more nuanced understandings of key historical ideas by revealing uses and contexts not previously noticed, and can suggest new areas of study. Such techniques are increasingly being employed as investigative tools by historical researchers who use them as adjuncts to other forms of empirical research. However, as often used in historical studies, they usually fall short of providing the more certain and secure foundation that this project seeks - a methodology that produces a replicable evidence base in which hypotheses can be tested with confidence to provide the kind of assurance that researchers in, for example, the health and social sciences take for granted. The key to such confidence is representativeness and researchers in other disciplines take great care to ensure that their sampling is indicative of the population under consideration. I have approached this study in the same spirit. By taking care to select a corpus of sources that is sufficiently large and representative of the broad body of relevant writing, the subsequent analyses have a greater assurance that what has been found is likely to be typical of the period.

There is, however, one caveat: it is important to remember that the outputs of these computational techniques do not, in themselves, constitute knowledge about the past although they can make important contributions to it. In the initial stages, they simply produce representative data which need to be explained and contextualised much like any historical source. By subjecting them to the insights brought by Tadmor, Skinner and Koselleck, such data can be analysed and the results verified before being developed and interpreted through the traditional historical methods that bring richness to cultural studies.

In the course of this project, the various approaches so far outlined began to form themselves into something akin to a methodology which was then applied to the study of obligation, the elements of which are described below.

Part II: Applying the Methodology - Obliged and Obliging Behaviour

The study draws its evidence from the written archive and I will argue in Chapter 1 that this approximates to how such terms were more generally understood. However, this dependence on print does set some limits since it will reflect the linguistic understanding of those with access to the printed word either directly or through the intervention of others. The thesis therefore has to remain silent about whether its conclusions extend to orally based meanings employed by those

whose language was largely uninfluenced by the written word, mainly the uneducated and the poorest elements of eighteenth-century society. The discussion also consciously excludes the concerns of the narrowly privileged and distorted world of the *Bon Ton* so refrains from utilising their letters and diaries (except for the small number of their letters included in ECCO-TCP). It prefers to concentrate on the vast majority of people who formed the backbone of eighteenth-century England.

The early part of the thesis concentrates on language meaning and use in the round across the eighteenth century. The focus then shifts to describe in more detail the increasing discussion of obliged and obliging behaviour in the period up to the start of the 1760s, leaving to another time discussion of the decline in references to obligation towards the end of the century. This period, from the late seventeenth century to 1760 broadly coincides with the blossoming of print culture, the growth of both the journal form and the novel as well as the major intellectual debates about moral philosophy from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Understanding* (1690) to Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).

One important requirement is to establish at the outset that the very frequent mention of the language of obligation was a real phenomenon of eighteenth-century writing in comparison with contemporary discussions of other value terms. This is the focus of Chapter 1 which explores the frequency of occurrence of a wide range of concept families in a large corpus of eighteenth-century works (ECCO-TCP) demonstrating that, of the many terms investigated, only references to love and friendship occurred more frequently than references to obligation. The chapter demonstrates with a high degree of confidence ($p < 0.001$) that the very high frequency of the language of obligation is a statistically significant finding. Given the critique of sources discussed earlier, it is important to establish the extent to which ECCO-TCP can be considered as typical of the century's written language and this is rigorously tested through comparison of these frequencies with those obtained from three other corpora. This suggests that there is a strong case for considering the ECCO-TCP corpus to be generally representative of extant eighteenth-century writing, a finding that will be of some importance to other investigators. The chapter also compares frequencies of OBLIGATION with previous and later periods and will show that this was, indeed, a uniquely eighteenth-century phenomenon. It demonstrates that the language of obligation became increasingly significant from the Restoration onwards, reaching a peak in the mid-eighteenth century and then beginning to fall away towards the end of the century.

The many shades of meaning and context with which this language was deployed are then examined in Chapter 2, drawing on the techniques of both corpus linguistics and distributional

semantics (word vector analysis) to explore its lexical and semantic meanings. It follows Koselleck's typology by first examining the formal definitions of OBLIGATION and DUTY in reference works and then shows that, in ordinary use, the utility and meanings of this language were a great deal more varied than contemporary lexicographers acknowledged. Obligation is demonstrated to have been a very flexible term, with each grammatical form able to convey many shades of meaning. It shows that the very wide and nuanced range of meanings employed by eighteenth-century writers all conveyed notions of a bond either of duty or gratitude and, as the century progressed, there was an increasing emphasis on its use as a descriptor of social relationships. The rich diversity of meanings revealed in this chapter, and the nuanced uses to which they were put, provide the basis for discussions in subsequent chapters.

The eighteenth century was a very significant period for British thought, producing some of Western philosophy's most important works, and Chapter 3 highlights the debates of its leading thinkers concerning ethics and the human urge towards obligation. In the main, these works discussed the sources and nature of the moral imperative and are of great interest to intellectual historians. However, the focus of the chapter is cultural rather than intellectual and it draws out what these thinkers had to say, not about the origins of obligation, but about what and towards whom we should feel obliged. By this shift of focus, it will demonstrate that each of these thinkers took as their starting point notions of personal obligation but, as the century progressed, they increasingly placed individuals within wider and wider spheres of obligation, culminating with Adam Smith in 1759 defining *public interest* as the highest virtue, making it the yardstick against which to measure personal morality.

The focus then turns to the treatment of obliged and obliging behaviour in more popular writing (the third plank in Koselleck's typology). However, because the thesis assumes that the language used in such works was generally accessible to the bulk of the population, it is important to establish who constituted the reading public and how available were such reading materials. Chapter 4 therefore represents a digression from the main themes of the thesis to explore who were reading the wide range of materials that had become available. It discusses the extent of literacy in the period, the availability of reading material, and the evidence concerning the inclination to read across social strata. It discusses the currently accepted understanding of literacy in the period (currently based on a narrow definition linked to the ability to sign one's name) but, by drawing on evidence of the extent of elementary schooling, the role of reading in everyday life, and the nature and range of the print trade, it concludes that the reach of the printed word was likely to have been wider than inferences from signature evidence might suggest. The chapter also

considers the utility of print in the everyday lives of a wide cross-section of people both at work and at leisure and will conclude that the variety of meanings and uses of language found in print material was likely to have been experienced by most classes of society, therefore reflecting in some measure the meanings and prevalence of conceptions of obliged and obliging behaviour in everyday conversation.

Chapter 5 then explores how obligation was discussed in the many forms of writing intended for public consumption in novels and plays, advice and hortatory literature, and essays and journals, highlighting the range of intentions behind conversations that concerned obligation and the wish to oblige. It employs a broad categorisation into those actions we *must* do, those we feel we *ought* to do and those we *could* do to oblige others. The discussion concludes that the language of obligation provided both a normative shorthand to refer to expectations of ethical behaviour and also a channel for discussion of newly important considerations of obligingness within communal life, expectations of considerate conduct and concern for generosity in dealing with others. It also charts a growing discourse of *society* as an expression of the collective will and wider obligation to the community, paralleling the findings from the earlier exploration of philosophical debate.

There is often, of course, a gulf between how a term is discussed and how it is acted out in everyday life. Chapter 6 therefore considers how ideas about personal duty and social obligation affected the daily lives of five eighteenth-century diarists. It discusses what they considered to be the extent and limits of the obliging bonds that existed towards others and how they coped with the twin demands made by the personal burdens of obligation towards family, friends and community, and social expectations to be obliging towards others. It analyses the thoughts and actions of these five writers along two dimensions which consider how the nature and strength of obligation varied both with its object (that is, the relationship to the person to whom it was extended) and the subject, for example in matters of belief, money, family ties and social responsibilities. It suggests that, in contrast to the print discourses previously discussed, practical obligation in everyday life was essentially both contingent, being conditioned by local expectations and individual relationships, and also timelessly rooted in the nature of the human condition.

CHAPTER 1: THE RISE OF OBLIGATION: AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PHENOMENON

Introduction

The core argument of this thesis is that the language of obligation held a ubiquitous and significant position in eighteenth-century discourse and behaviour. Whilst the claim for significance is left to subsequent chapters, it is essential at the outset to test the assertion that these terms were in very common use - that they were invoked at least as routinely as other terms that communicated values such as LOVE, FAMILY or HONOUR. This chapter therefore presents the evidential base for this claim through the simple expedient of counting and comparing the frequency with which such terms were employed in the published material of the time. It will show that the word forms of OBLIGATION and DUTY began to be employed much more commonly from the 1670s, reaching a climax in the 1750s. The following chapter will then explore the range of meanings attached to these terms and the contexts in which they were invoked whilst subsequent chapters will demonstrate that this was not simply a linguistic phenomenon but represented a sensibility that permeated eighteenth-century thought and action.

These first two chapters are based on two assumptions: that the corpus of eighteenth-century published works available to us (those that have survived until the twenty-first century and are available for transcription) are broadly representative of all published works of the period (including those now lost) and, secondly, that such works represent in some way the language in general use at the time. The first assumption is, to a large extent, unfathomable since it is difficult to assess what we do not know - one estimate suggests that around 10% of published material has been lost.[69] Historians of the British eighteenth century are fortunate that so much published material has survived but there are clear gaps, particularly with regard to ephemeral material (such as handbills, posters, newsprint, chapbooks, discussed below). Perhaps the best we can do is acknowledge this deficit, but we will return to the more specific question of corpus representativeness later. Whilst, as John Regan has noted, "A corpus is not a culture. Nor is it anything like the sum of language used in a time, nor a total picture of discourse or knowledge", a comprehensive corpus, such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) is the best window that we currently have into eighteenth-century thought and debate.[70]

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[69] Suarez, 'Towards a Bibliometric Analysis', p. 40.
[70] John Regan, 'Semantic Change and Knowledge Transmission: Some Case Studies in the Distribution of Words in ECCO', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 37.4 (2022), 1141–56 (p. 1144).

The second assumption can be addressed a little more directly. The sources used in this thesis are drawn almost exclusively from the printed word (with the exception of diaries in Chapter 6) and we need to consider whether the language in such works reflected the meanings ascribed to words in everyday oral or informal written use. It is generally acknowledged that language change begins with the spoken word, but genres that closely follow spoken practice such as personal letters and speech-like genres such as drama and dialogue in fiction can reflect those changes fairly accurately.[71] Whilst actual eighteenth-century speech usage is not directly recoverable it is likely that the writers of drama (whose words were intended to be spoken) and authors of the popular epistolary novels (which adopted the style of letters or journals) would have drawn on modes of expression that were recognisably realistic to their audiences. Even authors of popular non-fiction works would have sought to make their meanings clear and would therefore have adopted senses and syntaxes that were recognisable to readers. There were of course exceptions; for example, sermons often adopted a more high-blown language style intended to impress in both content and tone. However, it is reasonable to assume that the bulk of eighteenth-century writing employed a range of word meanings that reflected everyday usage at least as closely as the other sources available to us. This point is underlined in later chapters which demonstrate close similarities in the meanings attached to obligation in personal letters and private diaries compared to those found in fictional conversations and advice literature.

Whilst there are likely to have been significant differences between written and oral language, those distinctions may not have been as great as for later periods. Although literacy was far more common than in previous centuries (and this will be discussed in Chapter 4), the connections between writing and speaking were still very strong. Journals and newspapers were read aloud and discussed both at home and in social settings such as coffeehouses, and novels and other works were commonly shared in domestic settings.[72] Religious works were frequently based on spoken

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[71] Minna Palander-Collin, Minna Kristiina Nevala, and Arja Nurmi, 'The Language of Daily Life in the History of English: Studying How Macro Meets Micro', in *The Language of Daily Life in England, 1400-1800* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009), pp. 1–23 (p. 5); Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan, 'The Linguistic Evolution of Five Written and Speech-Based English Genres from the 17th to the 20th Centuries', in *History of Englishes: New Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Matti Rissanen and others (Walter de Gruyter, 2011), p. 689.

[72] For social settings, see Erin Skye Mackie, *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 15–16, and Markman Ellis, 'Coffee-House Libraries in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London', *The Library*, 10.1 (2009), 3–40. For domestic settings, see Naomi Tadmor, '"In the Even My Wife Read to Me": Women, Reading, and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 162–74 (pp. 165–74); and Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (London: Yale University Press, 2017).

sermons, and other works could be inspired by or critiqued through discussion with supporters.[73] Dramatic works were definitionally conversational, and they also influenced other literary forms rendered as forms of communication, whether the popular epistolary novel that was a feature of the period (*eg* Aphra Benn's foundational *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister,* 1684-7, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* 1740, and John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, 1748), autobiographical novels in the guise of diaries (*eg* Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719) or reportage such as in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726. Even conduct manuals frequently took the form of correspondence, whether actual letters that were subsequently published (as in the case of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* 1746-71) or invented (*eg* Wetenhall Wilkes' *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*, 1746).

It is therefore reasonable to assume that, whilst printed texts might not necessarily have closely mimicked casual speech patterns, their word meanings and import were likely to have followed generally accepted usage, a point emphasised by Adam Fox who, for a slightly earlier period, noted that

> There was no necessary antithesis between oral and literate forms of communication and preservation; the one did not have to destroy or undermine the other. If anything, the written word tended to augment the spoken, reinventing it and making it anew, propagating its contents, heightening its exposure, and ensuring its continued vitality, albeit sometimes in different forms. [...] Any crude binary opposition between 'oral' and 'literate' culture fails to accommodate the reciprocity between the different media by this time.[74]

Deriving meaningful evidence from texts

If we wished to simply demonstrate that certain words could be used to convey certain limited meanings in certain limited circumstances, it would be sufficient to rely on impressions gained from wide reading or from selective quotes from the period, couching any claims in sufficiently restricted terms. However, the intention here is to establish that certain words and meanings were in widespread and disproportionately common use and so it is important to adopt more objective and rigorous methodologies. This involves using a sufficiently large and representative database of writing, applying counting techniques which are robust and consistent, and then critically appraising both the methodologies and the results obtained. This study will rely, in the main, on a body of works (ECCO-TCP) which is a subset of Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO)

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[73] The ESTC lists over 24,000 works published between 1700 and 1799 that contain the word 'sermon' in their title, 'English Short Title Catalogue', *British Library* <http://estc.bl.uk/> [accessed 12 September 2019]; For pre-publication discussion of literary works see, for example, John Byrom, *The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom*, 4 vols (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1855), pp. 155–58; Samuel Richardson, *The Correspondence: Selected from the Original Manuscripts*, ed. by Anna Letitia Barbauld (London: Richard Phillips, 1804), VI, p. lxxiii.

[74] Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 5–6.

prepared by a collective of institutions, the Text Creation Partnership (TCP) to produce standard corpora of full-text works.[75]

Eighteenth Century Collections Online

ECCO consists of works published between 1701 and 1800. It was developed as a commercial project by Gale Cengage to publish the archive of books printed in the eighteenth century, initially held on microfilm. The current collection, now digital, contains some 184,536 texts (at 2020), and Gale claims that ECCO "contains every significant English-language and foreign-language title printed in the United Kingdom between the years 1701 and 1800" - Stephen H. Gregg describes it as "the largest single online collection of specifically eighteenth-century material available via academic institutions".[76] The only other comprehensive database of eighteenth-century works is the English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC), a union catalogue integrating the holdings of over 2,000 libraries worldwide. This Catalogue lists bibliographical details of all works published before 1801, around 480,000 of which (at 2019) were published in the eighteenth century, but it does not hold copies of actual texts.[77] Although constructed from an entirely different source, the titles contained in ECCO are derived from the ESTC database so its metadata is therefore highly reliable.[78] ECCO under-represents certain kinds of material in comparison with titles listed in the ESTC, although it is much more complete for the first part of the century, the focus of much of this thesis. Mikko Tolonen has demonstrated that the major discrepancies between the two series derive in the main from problems with the capture of pamphlets, broadsheets and chapbooks which have substantially decreasing representation in ECCO towards the end of the century.[79]

The texts in ECCO are rendered as facsimiles and there is a basic search facility based on text transcription using optical character recognition (OCR) software. However, these transcriptions were prepared between 2000 and 2009 using earlier generations of OCR software which, by current standards, can be inaccurate, especially for early documents that often contain formatting and

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[75] The Text Creation Partnership was established in 1999 initially as a collaboration between the University libraries of Michigan and Oxford, ProQuest (the owners of Early English Books Online, EEBO), and the Council on Library and Information Resources. In 2005 it expanded its work to incorporate Gale Cengage's ECCO collection. See 'Text Creation Partnership', *Welcome* <https://textcreationpartnership.org/> [accessed 3 December 2018].

[76] Gale Cengage, 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online' <www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online> [accessed 27 November 2018]; Stephen H. Gregg, *Old Books and Digital Publishing: Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*, Cambridge Elements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 1; In this study, ECCO has been interrogated through the digital archive located at 'JISC Historical Texts'.

[77] 'English Short Title Catalogue'.

[78] Leo Lahti and Computational History Group, University of Helsinki, 'ESTC/ECCO Comparison', *GitHub*, 2019 <https://github.com/COMHIS/estc> [accessed 12 September 2019]; Leo Lahti, Niko Ilomäki, and Mikko Tolonen, 'A Quantitative Study of History in the English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC), 1470-1800', *LIBER Quarterly*, 25.2 (2015), 87.

[79] Mikko Tolonen, 'A Data-Driven Comparison between ESTC and ECCO' (presented at the BSECS 50th Annual Conference: 'Anniversaries, Jubilees, Commemorations', Online, 2021).

spelling variations, and this creates a barrier to certain kinds of scholarship. One estimate is that the accuracy of ECCO's OCR transcription is just 77%.[80] As a result, a group of universities, the Text Creation Partnership collaborated with Gale to hand-transcribe key texts to form "more accurate" copies, the new collection being termed ECCO-TCP.[81] The first tranche of 2,188 texts (69m words) was released in 2011 and contained a wide variety of written texts mostly those which were read for pleasure, contemplation or instruction, with prose accounting for around 66% of words, plays for 23%, and poetry for 11%.[82] John Levin has generously made available a plain text version of the original ECCO-TCP collection and this has been used for the analyses in this thesis.[83] The representativeness of the ECCO-TCP corpus will be discussed later in this chapter.[84]

ECCO-TCP thus provides a powerful basis with which to explore common word practices in the eighteenth century. It is large and varied and can therefore provide many examples of word usage drawn from a wide range of sources. It can be used to compare terms and, when the individual words are converted into a form that tags them grammatically, further differences can be revealed, an approach that will be heavily used in the next chapter. A crucial step taken in this thesis has been to organise the 2,188 ECCO-TCP texts by decade so that diachronic analyses can be performed, tracing changes in usage across the century. The quality of transcription is of a reasonably high standard as Hill and Hengchen have noted, "While the overall quality of ECCO-TCP is very good, it is not perfect [...] Nonetheless, it is as good of a standard [*sic*] as is available for a corpus of this size, quality, and importance".[85] ECCO-TCP is certainly large enough to be considered a representative archive of eighteenth-century language-in-use and to function as a corpus for linguistic and conceptual studies (although this claim of representativeness will be tested later). It would, however, be seriously deficient as a representative *library* of eighteenth-century works, that is, as a source for selecting and studying individual texts - it has been criticised, for example, for the absence of works by early-century female authors and an over-emphasis on canonical authors.[86]

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[80] Patrick Spedding, '"The New Machine": Discovering the Limits of ECCO', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44.4 (2011), 437–53; Mark J Hill and Simon Hengchen, 'Quantifying the Impact of Dirty OCR on Historical Text Analysis: Eighteenth Century Collections Online as a Case Study', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.4 (2019), 825–43; Gregg, *Old Books*, p. 64.

[81] 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)' <https://textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/ecco-tcp-eighteenth-century-collections-online/> [accessed 19 September 2022].

[82] Ryan Heuser, 'Word Vectors in the Eighteenth Century, Episode 1: Concepts – Adventures of the Virtual', 2016 <http://ryanheuser.org/word-vectors-1/> [accessed 4 March 2017].

[83] John Levin, 'TCP-Plain-Texts', *GitHub* <https://github.com/Anterotesis/historical-texts> [accessed 12 January 2013].

[84] A project by the University of Wisconsin-Madison has recently produced a substantially revised version (The VEP TCP Collection) which removes additional transcription and other errors and now contains 2,473 texts available in both original and standardised spelling. Deidre Stuffer, 'Visualizing English Print Project', *Visualizing English Print: Textual Analysis of the Printed Record*. The VEP version of ECCO-TCP is available at 'VEP TCP Collection - Visualizing English Print' <https://pages.graphics.cs.wisc.edu/VEPHugo/corpora/tcpcollection/> [accessed 1 July 2023].

[85] Hill and Hengchen, 'Dirty OCR', p. 826.

[86] Stephen H. Gregg, 'The Nature of ECCO-TCP', *Digital Defoe: Studies in Defoe & His Contemporaries*, 14.1, 2022, p. 18.

For such purposes, the parent ECCO collection provides a far more comprehensive library and Gale, which owns the rights to ECCO outside the UK, plans to launch a further phase of its digitisation project and a further 90,000 texts.[87]

Incidence of the language of obligation

ECCO-TCP thus provides a powerful database with which to explore the frequency with which words were used in eighteenth-century writing, and the incidence of the various forms of OBLIGATION, DUTY (*oblige, obliging, dutiful, etc)* provides the central data-point for this thesis, occurring some 45,000 times in ECCO-TCP.[88] Such a statement provokes the question of whether this incidence is exceptional and this can be tested by comparing it with the frequency of other words communicating values that were also in common use in published material in the period.

An enduring topic of eighteenth-century conversation concerned the importance of *family* and the word (or its plural) was mentioned 26,000 times in the collection whilst references to *friend(s)* and *friendship* appeared 61,000 times; it should be noted however that both FAMILY and FRIEND had much broader meanings than they do today, as did many other terms we will discuss.[89] *Money* was discussed frequently and it, with its synonyms, was mentioned 21,000 times. Cashflow was a continuing concern and CREDIT occurred 10,000 times with DEBT 9, 000 times. However, both these terms also had non-monetary meanings and debt was often associated with obligation whilst credit had meanings akin to HONOUR (occurring 29,000 times). Similarly, TRUST occurred 13,000 times. Belief was a popular topic for reading material and GOD occurred 40,000 times, whilst *Christ/Christian/Christianity* occurred 27,000 times and RELIGION 24,000 times. Diaries and letters frequently dwelt on questions of health so that synonyms for *illness* appeared 13,000 times. Concern about crime was another feature of the period and synonyms for *crime* and *criminal* appeared 14,000 times. Life events had frequent mentions - birth terms 14,000, MARRIAGE 28,000 and DEATH 37,000. Emotional references featured often, mainly in dramatic, poetic and fictional works - LOVE occurred a considerable 68,000 times, PASSION 25,000 times and SENTIMENT 11,000 times. Neither *feelings* nor *emotions* were terms much used in this period. CONSCIENCE, a term that will be discussed in Chapter 3, occurred 6,000 times. As we will see in Chapter 5, there was a

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[87] Mikko Tolonen and others, 'Corpus Linguistics and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)', *Research in Corpus Linguistics*, 9.1 (2021), 19–34 (p. 22).

[88] This count, and all others performed on ECCO-TCP, was carried out using an offline concordancer, Laurence Anthony's 'AntConc' (Tokyo: Waseda University, 2018) <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/>; The results were checked using a simple counting tool, Eric Popivker's 'Find & Replace Tool' (zzzprojects, 2014) <http://findandreplace.io/> [accessed 9 April 2018].

[89] The meanings of FAMILY and FRIEND will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

significant discourse of benevolence, and there were at least 21,000 references to *generosity*, *benevolence* and *kindliness*, although these figures are somewhat muddied by other meanings of *kind* as 'type', as in "every kind of animal" so noun forms have been excluded from this count.

Modern historians frequently describe the eighteenth century in categorical terms, often selecting an appropriate expression for the title of general books on the period. In the New Oxford History series, the two volumes describing the eighteenth century are Julian Hoppit's 'A Land of Liberty?' and Paul Langford's 'A Polite and Commercial People'. In ECCO-TCP, LIBERTY occurs 14,000 times and its near-synonym FREEDOM 7,000 times, with *polite/politeness* 5,000 times (and the similar *complacence/complaisance* 1,500 times) whilst *commerce/commercial* occurs 6,000 times. The original Oxford History volume covering the first half of the century was Bail Williams' "The Whig Supremacy", and certainly the early part of this period was renowned for its 'rage of party'. however, *Whig/Tory* appear just 4,000 times. Peter Ackroyd's books for Macmillan covering this period were entitled, respectively, "Rebellion" and "Revolution" and variants of REBEL and REVOLT appear a total of 12,000 times. Linda Colley's Penguin book "Wealth of Nations" and her Yale Press "Britons: Forging the Nation" yield 18,000 occurrences of *wealth* or *trade*, 16,000 mentions of *Briton/Britain/British/Britannia* and 30,000 mentions of *nation/national.* In this last case, the most frequent mentions were in the early century, revolving around discussion of the Act of Union but there was another peak from the 1760s, presumably in reaction to the American and French revolutions. The relatively low frequencies of some of these terms should not be taken to imply that they are not valuable descriptors of the eighteenth century, only that they did not feature strongly in the generality of contemporary writing included in the collection. However, the very low incidence of POLITE (which is mirrored in other eighteenth-century corpora) is noteworthy, given the extensive critical attention that politeness has received among eighteenth-century scholars.[90] As was suggested in the Introduction, its significance as an eighteenth-century trope may need to be re-appraised or re-interpreted as a modern term to describe certain kinds of eighteenth-century practice.

The detailed results of this analysis are summarised in Table 1 which also provides a measure of what I have called a word's 'dispersal rate' - the proportion of texts where the word occurs at least once. Such a measure is relevant because a specialised word might occur extremely frequently in just a few texts, distorting the results. However, most of the keywords discussed above were

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[90] For an overview of the debate, see, for instance, Susan M. Fitzmaurice, 'Changes in the Meanings of Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Discourse Analysis and Historical Evidence', in *Historical (Im)Politeness*, ed. by Jonathan Culpeper and Dániel Z. Kádár (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

mentioned at least once in well over half of texts, suggesting that they all represented commonly understood and used terms.

Table 1: Occurrences and dispersal across texts of some 'value terms' in the ECCO-TCP corpus

TERMS		OCCURRENCES	DISPERSAL
love/s/ed/'d/er/ers/ing		67,585	85%
friend/s, friendship		61,462	89%
oblige, duty and their inflections *(oblige and its inflections)* *(duty and its inflections)*		**44,943** *(26,388)* *(18,555)*	**84%**
beauty/pretty *and inflections*		40,695	81%
God *(excluding 1,398 non-capitalised references to pagan gods)*		39,726	69%
death, dying		37,096	81%
nation/s/al		29,595	70%
honour/honor		29,469	82%
marry/iage/ied, wedding, betrothed/al		28,317	56%
Christ, Christian/s, Christianity		26,691	54%
family/ies		25,639	66%
passion/s		24,938	73%
religion/ous/ly		24,036	66%
liberty/freedom		21,422	76%
money, monies, cash, currency, wages, income		20,858	63%
Kind/ly/red/hearted, benevolent/ce, beneficient/ce, generous/osity *(excluding* kind *as a noun)*		20,857	69%
wealth, trade		17,882	68%
briton/ain/ish/annia		15,560	56%
happiness, enjoyment, contentment		15,151	69%
birth, born		14,460	74%
crime/s, criminal, malfeasance, theft/s, thief/eves, crook/s, villain/s		13,911	70%
Illness/es, ill-health, sick, sickness/es, sickly, malady/ies, disease/s		12,893	67%
dis/en/in/mis/ trust /ed/ing/s		12,669	74%
rebel, rebellion/s, revolution/s		11,574	56%
sentiment/s/al/alist		11,128	55%
credit and its inflections *(including meanings of credit as 'repute')*		10,137	59%
debt and its inflections *(including the sense of being beholden or obliged)*		8,921	58%
commerce/ial *(including meanings associated with communication and sexual activity)*		6,358	38%
un/polite/r/ness, non/complaisance/nt/ly		6,288	50%
conscience/s		6,086	53%

It is important to register some caution about making direct comparisons between individual word groups since their construction has been somewhat subjective. They may consist of a single word, usually with its plural (*God, religion, family, passion*, *etc*) or include a single word and its derivatives (*eg, birth, nation, Christ*). Some contain a few close synonyms (*oblige/duty, wealth/trade*, *etc*) and others are a broad group of semantically similar words (*eg,* six terms

associated with money). Significantly, some consist only of nouns (*eg honour, family, crime, wealth*) whilst others contain a mix of grammatical forms (*love, oblige, death, polite*). Lexemes that contain variant parts of speech have more potential for nuances of meaning and this can influence their frequency of use. Additionally, some individual part-of-speech variants may belong to the same lexeme (for example, *oblige* in the sense of 'to require' belongs to the same lexeme as *obligation*), while others may belong to a different lexeme (*eg, oblige* in its sense of 'to be accommodating towards' could be considered as a different but closely related lexeme to *obligation*). Such linguistic phenomena simply emphasise the value of such terms for their users, rather than detracting from the methodology represented by Table 1.

The choices made in forming the semantic groups in the table have therefore been subjective and other choices could have been made, altering some rankings. But experimentation suggests that including or excluding such marginal terms have only small impact: for example, including *complaisance* alongside *polite* increased the size of this group by less than 1,000 and changed its position in the table by one place. Similarly, other equivalent terms could have been included within the semantic field of OBLIGATION but such changes would not have altered its position in the table; for example, gratitude and non-financial meanings of debt and indebtedness frequently carried the sense of 'being obliged', and *complaisance* could, with strong justification, have been included as a synonym for *obligingness* rather than for *politeness*. For these reasons, the relative rankings of 'near-neighbours' in the table should not be over-interpreted. Other reasonably frequent word groupings could also have been included in the table, for example, FAITH (19,000) or VIRTUE 24,000) but they add little to the current analysis. With those caveats, the overall structure of Table 1 does provide a clear indication of the frequency with which these 'value-terms' were discussed in the written language of the time.[91]

It would have been possible to construct more populous word groups. For example, kinship terms (*mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister*) when taken together occur with much more frequency than any group listed in Table 1 (156,000 times), but such words usually performed a different function in usage, principally stating a relationship (*eg* "my Mother said …") rather than implying a value in the way that, for instance, mention of *family* often did.[92] Similarly, modal verbs (*shall, should, etc*) have an essential role in modifying lexical verbs (occurring some 989,000 times in the collection) but they do not themselves convey lexical meaning and have been excluded from

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[91] For consistency, the same word groups have been used throughout this thesis.
[92] Whilst this frequency excludes Christian references such as *Holy Father* or *Mother of Christ* it was not possible to remove religious honorifics such as *Brother John*.

the table.[93] It should be noted that OBLIGE can also act modally - for example, 'he is obliged to go' appears to be equivalent to 'he must go', whilst 'I feel obliged to help' implies 'I ought to help'. However, the OBLIGE form usually conveys additional information about the values attached to the action which are absent from a purely modal verb: being obliged to go or to help implies a degree of psychological compulsion attached to the act which is missing from 'he must go' or 'she ought to help'. The internal motivations associated with obligation vexed eighteenth-century philosophers and will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The word groupings for Table 1 were chosen because they represent projections and values that have been the subject of much historical study (with the notable exception of OBLIGATION). The analysis thus suggests that, in comparison with these other value-terms, the language of obligation represented a surprisingly important trope for eighteenth-century minds, one that warrants the attention given by this thesis.

However, two other questions arise before we can have confidence in that conclusion. Firstly, the data is drawn from an uncertain source (ECCO-TCP) and it is important to test the representativeness of that source - whether the texts it contains are typical of eighteenth-century writing. Secondly, we need to ask whether this emphasis on obligation was a special facet of eighteenth-century discourse or was it simply a continuation of an earlier trope. I will address both these questions in turn.

Justifying the use of ECCO-TCP

The early part of this thesis is heavily reliant on analysis of the ECCO-TCP database, and so it is critically important to address the nature of the database - its provenance, reliability and general trustworthiness as a source. Thomas Padilla has called this 'the critical addressability of the data', by which he means:

> the ability of data documentation to afford individuals the ability to evaluate both the technical and social forces that shape the data. A researcher should be able to understand why certain data were included and excluded, why certain transformations were made, who made those transformations, and at the same time a researcher should have access to the code and tools that were used to effect those transformations.[94]

In contrast, ECCO-TCP is poorly documented mainly because of the serendipitous nature of its origins, and it has therefore been necessary for this research to take some effort to establish its

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[93] Ronald W. Langacker, 'Modals: Striving for Control', in *English Modality : Core, Periphery and Evidentiality*, ed. by Juana I. Marín-Arrese, Topics in English Linguistics [TiEL] (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013), p. 3.
[94] Thomas Padilla, 'Humanities Data in the Library: Integrity, Form, Access', *D-Lib Magazine*, 22.3/4 (2016).

value. This part of the thesis addresses these key strands, without which any analysis drawn from the data would have been of suspect value.

ECCO-TCP is an imperfect corpus on which to base a study because of the difficulty in demonstrating the extent to which it is representative of eighteenth-century published texts. A corpus can only be considered representative if it bears a clear and defined relationship to the body of works it claims to represent, and there are generally two approaches taken in constructing a representative corpus - the monitor corpus and the sample (or balanced) corpus.[95] Monitor corpora become representative because of their size and inclusiveness. A good example of this is the use of the World Wide Web as a corpus since it now includes almost all forms of written English in good proportion to their prevalence. As ECCO includes most extant books published in the eighteenth century, it would also form a good monitor corpus if the full-text content of its works were to become available in a suitable form. Whilst ECCO-TCP is a full-text subset of ECCO, it is too small to be considered a monitor corpus. It is also questionable as the second form of corpus, the sample or balanced corpus, where the criteria for inclusion of texts are set out in advance to ensure proper representation of genres in proportion to their prevalence across the time frame under consideration.

None of this was true of the construction of ECCO-TCP which began as an ambitious project to initially transcribe 10,000 ECCO texts but was curtailed through financial and other difficulties. Decisions concerning the inclusion of the initial texts were not based on representativeness since it was envisaged that the corpus would eventually include all works, so early inclusion was based on other considerations such as an initial emphasis on literary works, the interests of particular researchers and the avoidance of duplication with other digitised collections.[96] Thus, whilst ECCO-TCP has the advantage of size, its representativeness is unclear and has not, until now, been tested.

Scholars face the difficulty that there is not currently an alternative properly representative general corpus of eighteenth-century texts although smaller specialised corpora exist which include some eighteenth-century texts, for example, the Corpus of English Dialogues and ARCHER (both described more fully below). Whilst neither of these corpora has sufficient eighteenth-century texts to provide the kind of range required for this current study, they can provide benchmarks against which ECCO-TCP may be compared. Similarly, the quasi-monitor corpus, ECCO can also provide a

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[95] Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie, *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 7–9.
[96] Private email correspondence (07/11/2018) with Paul F. Schaffner, Head of the Text Creation Unit, University of Michigan Libraries, who supervised the various TCP projects and continues his involvement as Text Production Manager for the Text Creation Partnership. See also, Gregg, 'The Nature of ECCO-TCP', pp. 17–18.

comparator against which ECCO-TCP can be tested. The following sections provide those comparisons, beginning with a description of the corpora.

Comparing the corpora

The **Corpus of English Dialogues** (CED) is a balanced corpus of written materials published between 1560 and 1760 drawn from different genres that purported to represent authentic spoken speech.[97] It includes 72 texts published between 1680 and 1760 (635,000 words, averaging 8,815 words per text). **ARCHER** (*A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers*) is a balanced corpus of written and speech-based texts drawn from British and American English 1600-1999 designed as a tool for the study of longitudinal language change.[98] It contains 506 texts published between 1700 and 1799 (934,000 words with average text length of 660 words).

Each of the word groups previously analysed using ECCO-TCP was subjected to a similar analysis in the CED and ARCHER corpora (except for KIND because the structures of those corpora do not allow the exclusion of the noun form) and compared with the results for ECCO-TCP.[99] As each corpus draws on datasets of different sizes, the data have been normalised and expressed as frequencies (occurrences per million words) so that they can be directly compared. The results are displayed graphically in Figure 3**.**

Figure 3: Frequency per million of 'value' words across three corpora

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This chart visually suggests that there may be some correlation between the results in ECCO-TCP and the other two corpora, but the precise nature of that relationship is not immediately apparent. Fortunately, there are mathematical techniques available to compare series and measure the extent of any correlation between them, in this case utilising Spearman's rank-order correlation which measures the strength and direction of association between two or more ranked variables. Generally, a Spearman correlation of r_s in the range 0.60 to 0.79 is considered to indicate strong correlation whilst 0.80 to 1.0 indicates very strong correlation.[100] The correlation between ECCO-TCP and ARCHER was found to be r_s = 0.841 (very strong) whilst that with CED was r_s = 0.812 (also very strong), both with high statistical significance (p<0.001).

Turning now to comparisons between ECCO-TCP and its parent collection ECCO, the limitations of text-searching in ECCO make it difficult to obtain an accurate count of how many times a particular word family occurs in the collection.[101] It is possible, however, to count the number of texts in which at least one occurrence of a word from a particular word family occurs providing its dispersal rate which can then be compared with the dispersal results from ECCO-TCP. Such an indirect method might provide a more divergent result for two reasons: the samples are based on texts rather than words (in ECCO-TCP 2,188 texts rather than 69m words) and there is therefore a greater tendency for results to cluster; secondly, a single occurrence of a word in a text does not necessarily indicate common usage. The results from this comparison are displayed as a scatter diagram in Figure 4 and this suggests that there is a relationship between the two dispersal rates albeit with a few outliers (BRITON and COMMERCE being under-represented in the dispersal rate for ECCO and PASSION being under-represented in ECCO-TCP). Despite these reservations there is, nevertheless, a strong correlation between the two series (Spearman coefficient r_s = 0.664) and, if the outliers are excluded, there is a very strong correlation (r_s = 0.812).

[100] Iain Weir, 'Spearman's Correlation', *Statstutor* <http://www.statstutor.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/spearmans.pdf> [accessed 28 November 2018].
[101] Using JISC 'Historical Texts' <http://historicaltexts.jisc.ac.uk/> [accessed 6 March 2018].

Figure 4: Scatter plot of dispersal rates in ECCO and ECCO-TCP

.... *Regression line*
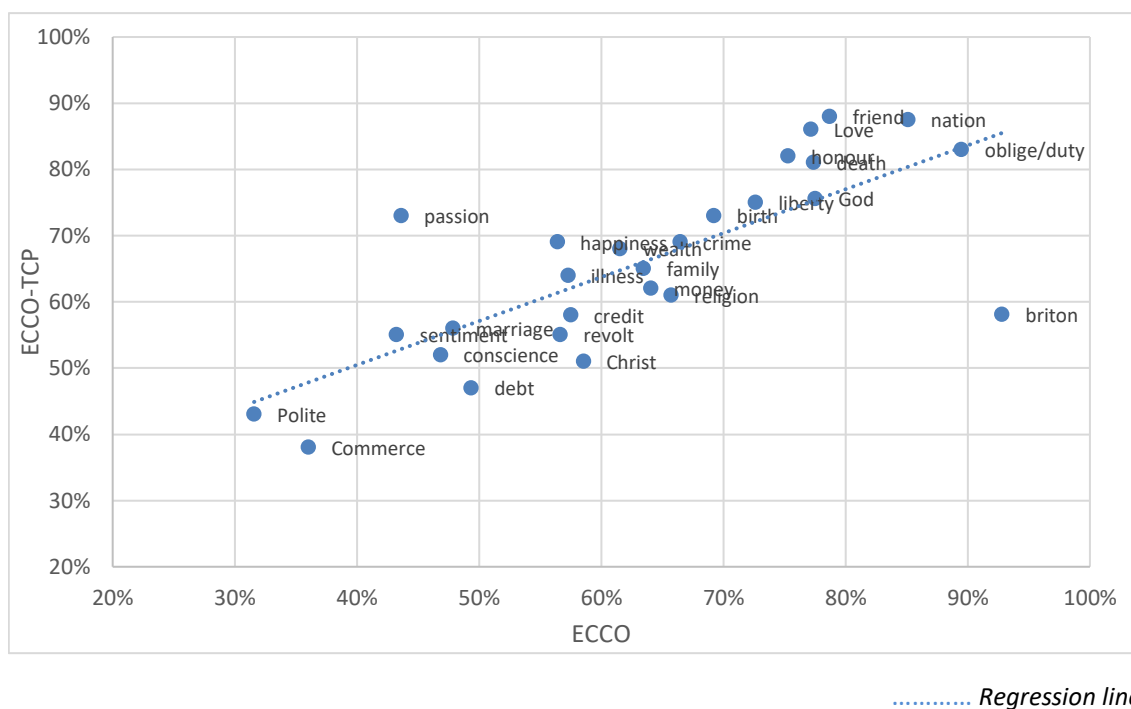
The above analyses demonstrate that there is at least a strong correlation between ECCO-TCP and the parent quasi-monitor corpus (ECCO) and a very strong correlation with two balanced sample corpora representing different aspects of eighteenth-century writing. This, therefore, provides a high level of confidence about two aspects of this research. Firstly, it is reasonable to claim that ECCO-TCP is broadly representative of works published in the eighteenth century, at least with respect to the kinds of 'value-terms' addressed in this thesis. The second important conclusion that we can reach from this statistical analysis is that it is highly unlikely that the null hypothesis is correct - that the frequency of mentions of OBLIGATION is merely a random feature of the corpus. A more extensive comparison across wider vocabularies and other corpora could provide a more universal description of the robustness of the ECCO-TCP corpus, and such a study could be of great benefit to eighteenth-century scholars.

Comparisons with the seventeenth century

We now need to address the question of whether the prevalence of the language of obligation was unique to the eighteenth century or whether it was also present in the previous one. Fortunately, there is a very good corpus of early modern texts published in English based on *Early English Books Online*, EEBO-TCP, the current version of which (*v.3*) contains nearly 39,000 texts

(996m words) published in the seventeenth century.[102] For this exercise, an analysis of the frequency of occurrence of the various forms of OBLIGE/DUTY in EEBO-TCP across the double-decades of the seventeenth century was carried out together with a similar analysis of ECCO-TCP, the results again being normalised, and displayed in Figure 5. [103]

Figure 5: Incidence of inflected forms of OBLIGE and DUTY 1600-1799
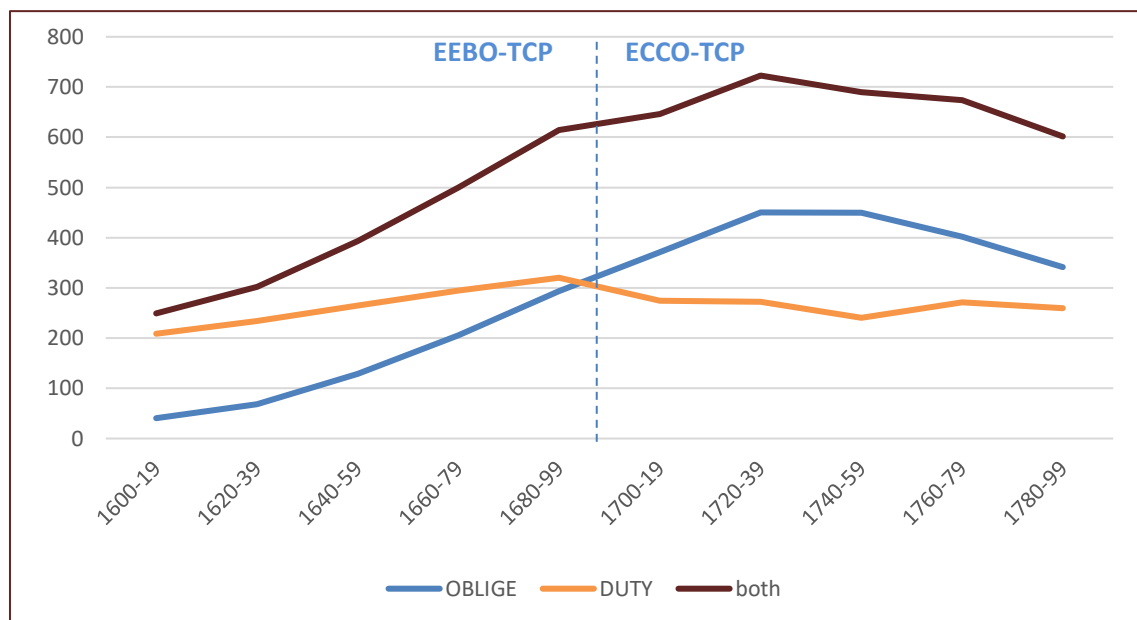
Sources: EEBO-TCP(V3)/ECCO-TCP, frequency per million, 3-point moving average

This demonstrates that DUTY occurred within the database with fairly low frequency at the start of the seventeenth century whilst OBLIGE was in only very rare use. The frequency of DUTY in its various forms saw modest increase in the turbulent mid-seventeenth-century when a high proportion of mentions referred to religious duty (*ie* they occurred in the corpus in close proximity to religious terms) and then saw a modest decline for the remainder of the two centuries, with the mean incidence of all forms of DUTY for each century being similar.[104] There was however a shift in emphasis from the early eighteenth century away from references to religious duty towards more generalised moral duty. Against this broad trend, there was a brief rise in the number of references to DUTY in the 1710s followed by a substantial fall in the 1720s and 1730s, hidden by the averaging process used in the graph. This was entirely due to a three-fold increase in occurrences of *duties*

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[102] For a description of the origins and development of EEBO, and a defence of computational textuality more generally, see Michael Gavin, 'How To Think About EEBO', *Textual Cultures*, 11.1–2 (2019), 70–105.
[103] The analysis of EEBO-TCP was carried out using Lancaster University's Corpus Query Processor and that for ECCO-TCP using AntConc.
[104] Occurrences per million words: seventeenth century 257, eighteenth century 268.

consequent on taxation difficulties following the Act of Union in 1707 (particularly in relation to tobacco, salt and coal) as merchants and Parliament attempted to deal with the disparities between Scottish and English practices.[105] This was followed by a period of relative silence concerning taxation with the number of references to financial *duties* greatly reduced in the 1720s and 1730s, returning to more consistent levels subsequently.

More significant was the rise in the incidence of all word forms of OBLIGATION across the two centuries, with the century-mean increasing three-fold.[106] The increase in the noun form *obligation* was relatively moderate (60%) but *obliging* more than doubled and *oblige* increased ten-fold. The various verb forms of obligation taken together showed the greatest increase - by a factor of 47 times between 1600 and 1710. The incidence of all forms of OBLIGATION reached a peak towards the mid-eighteenth century but, even by the end of the century, the terms were still in frequent use although showing steady decline. It would appear therefore that this language of obligation was employed a great deal more in the eighteenth century than in the preceding one and represented a distinguishing feature of the period.

As a further point of comparison, modern usage of OBLIGATION, DUTY and their derivatives is now a little below the level found at the start of the seventeenth century (around 200 occurrences per million words) with the emphasis shifting from religious to legal obligation (*ie* occurrences of obligation and duty mainly appear close to legal, financial and contractual terms).[107] The moral and complaisant senses rare for much of the seventeenth century but prevalent in the eighteenth century have again become broadly uncommon in modern writing.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that the language of obligation was deployed unusually frequently in eighteenth-century writing and that this was an exceptional feature in comparison with other terms that transmitted values. It has demonstrated that the principal database used in this study (ECCO-

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[105] Jacob M. Price, 'Glasgow, the Tobacco Trade, and the Scottish Customs, 1707-1730: Some Commercial, Administrative and Political Implications of the Union', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 63.175 (1984), 1–36; Christopher A. Whatley, 'Economic Causes and Consequences of the Union of 1707: A Survey', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 68.186 (1989), 150–81.

[106] Occurrences per million words 136 and 407 respectively.

[107] Modern comparisons have been made using the LOB, BNC and BE06 corpora of contemporary English, comparing them to EEBO. Geoffrey Leech and others, 'The Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus (LOB)', 1978 <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/LOB/> [accessed 14 April 2014]; 'British National Corpus (XML Edition): Powered by CQPweb' <https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/bncxmlweb/index.php> [accessed 7 February 2018]; Paul Baker, 'The BE06 Corpus of British English and Recent Language Change' <https://benjamins.com/catalog/ijcl.14.3.02bak> [accessed 19 May 2018]; University of Lancaster, 'Early English Books Online (V3)', *Corpus Query Processor*, 2018 <https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/eebov3/>.

TCP) is broadly representative of the generality of eighteenth-century writing and provides a reasonable basis for studies of language use in the period.

We now need to consider the wide variety of meanings that the language of obligation could convey in eighteenth-century usage, many of them demonstrating new emphases that provided the tools with which emergent ideas could be discussed.

CHAPTER 2 THE LANGUAGE OF OBLIGATION

Introduction

This chapter will explore how the terms OBLIGATION and DUTY were used across multiple genres in everyday writing. It will discuss the shades of meaning people gave to the various grammatical forms these terms took and consider which were the more prevalent. It will also explore the semantic fields that surrounded these terms to better understand the contexts in which they were used. Many of the chapter's arguments are based on two key assumptions: firstly, the more frequently an idea is mentioned in the conversations of the day, the more central it is to that period's discourses. Secondly, if two ideas frequently occur together in those conversations, there is more than an incidental connection between them, the regular co-occurrence of two words implying an intimate relationship between their underlying meanings. For example, if *duty* frequently occurs close to familial terms such as *mother, father, daughter* or *son* it is reasonable to reach conclusions about how those roles were understood. These two assumptions will be familiar to students of computational linguistics since they have defined that discipline since the 1950s, summed up by John Firth's 1957 dictum "you shall know a word by the company it keeps".[108]

The focus in this chapter is not on philology, the history of language, but on the historical implications of specific language uses. By necessity, it will be important to use computational tools to derive data concerning the relative frequency of occurrences of different language terms so that we can better understand the relative significance of different ideas and meanings. It underlines the centrality of the sense of obligation in eighteenth-century England but its findings also provide a solid basis for later discussions about the role of obligation as a moral imperative and social glue. Several technical devices have been used to obtain these results and brief explanations will be given where this is helpful.

The meanings attached to the language of obligation are complex and inter-woven both semantically and conceptually, and these meanings have changed over time so that present-day notions can be poor guides to eighteenth-century usages and meanings.[109] The chapter will, therefore, analyse how these words were used across a very wide selection of eighteenth-century published writing. It will look at how DUTY and OBLIGATION and their associated forms (*dutiful, oblige, obliging*, *etc*) were treated, the shades of meaning they conveyed and the different contexts

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[108] Firth, 'Linguistic Theory', p. 11.
[109] The phrase 'language of obligation' is used in this chapter to describe the totality of meanings attached to the various forms of OBLIGATION and DUTY.

in which they were used, concluding with a broad semantic description of eighteenth-century usages.

The meanings of OBLIGATION

OBLIGATION could be found in many modes and voices - it might be used almost phatically, as a simple formula that conveyed little meaning, for example in valedictions. Typical of this is Charlotte Lennox's dedication of *The Female Quixote* to the Earl of Middlesex, declaring herself "Your Lordship's Obliged and most Obedient Humble Servant".[110] It was frequently used to oil the wheels of polite conversation rather in the way that modern Britons sprinkle their conversation with *please* and *thank you*, an example being Lady Montagu's excuse for writing to the Countess of Bristol, "I have not forgot her obliging command, of sending her some account of my travels".[111] It could also be a marker of complaisance - Alexander Pope's correspondence frequently used variants of "your obliging letter".[112] It might imply a duty or debt owed to another - the fictitious John Buncle described how Dr Fitzgibbons "immediately began to repeat his obligations to me, for the deliverance I had given his son",[113] or it could describe a moral or legal requirement, "What is the Obligation of Parliaments to the Addresses or Petitions of the People and what the Duty of the Addressers?", asked Daniel Defoe.[114]

This range of meanings had a very long history. The lexeme OBLIGE has its roots in both Old French and Latin, with medieval uses ranging across meanings related to binding by an oath or promise, constraining, performing a service or giving pleasure.[115] Similarly, DUTY and the noun form *due* derive from Anglo-Norman to carry meanings of either obligatory payment (either financial or as homage or respect) or something to which a person has a right.[116] *Due* as a noun had largely disappeared from use by the eighteenth century (just 146 occurrences in ECCO-TCP) and has been excluded from discussion in this thesis.

Before examining the range of usages in regular use in eighteenth-century written English, the next section will explore how OBLIGATION and DUTY were defined by the lexicographers of the age.

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[110] Lennox, *The Female Quixote*.

[111] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters and Works*, ed. by Lord Wharncliffe, 2 vols (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861), I, p. 230.

[112] Anon, *Letters of Mr. Pope, and Several Eminent Persons, from the Year 1705, to 1711. ...* (London: The booksellers of London and Westminster, 1735).

[113] Thomas Amory, *The Life of John Buncle, Esq.* (London: J. Johnson, 1766), p. 432.

[114] Daniel Defoe, *Two Great Questions Considered ... Being a Sixth Essay at Removing National Prejudices against the Union* (London, 1707).

[115] Oxford English Dictionary, 'Oblige, v., Etymology' (Oxford University Press, 2023), Oxford English Dictionary.

[116] Oxford English Dictionary, 'Due & Duty, n., Etymology' (Oxford University Press, 2023), Oxford English Dictionary.

Eighteenth-century dictionaries

Early modern dictionaries were conceived in the main as standardising mechanisms to help readers understand what words meant and how they should be used. For example, Thomas Blount (1656) described the purpose of his *Glossographia* as "chiefly intended for the more-knowing Women, and less-learned Men; or indeed for all such of the illiterate; who can but finde, in an Alphabet, the word they understand not".[117] This was echoed in John Kersey's *New English Dictionary* (1713) which was "chiefly designed for the Benefit of young Scholars, Tradesmen, Artificers, Foreigners, and the Female Sex, who would learn to spell truly; being so fitted to every Capacity, that it may be a ready and Continued Help to all that want an Instructor".[118] These are examples of what Percy Long termed 'mastery' dictionaries that intended to improve the general understanding of the reader. Long identified three further types of dictionary published in the early modern period.[119] The earliest and simplest were 'hard word' dictionaries, listing unusual terms whose meanings were obscure: for example, the first substantive entry in Blount's *Glossographia* was "*Abacted (abactus)* driven away by violence or stealth; also deposed". The early eighteenth century then saw the introduction of 'universal' dictionaries which attempted to include all 'polite' words in the English language as well as foreign terms in common use.[120] For his 1704 dictionary, Edward Cocker set out its purpose as interpreting "the most refined and difficult words", but the work also contained informative appendices: "An Historico-Poetical Dictionary" listing the names of people, places and gods, "the most useful Terms in Military Discipline" and "The Terms which Merchants and others make use of in Trade and Commerce".[121] The final and most extended type described by Long was the 'etymological' dictionary which included the supposed derivations of words. Additionally, the mid-eighteenth century then saw the development of a new and more comprehensive form of alphabetical reference work, the encyclopædia, the first being Chambers' 1728 *Cyclopaedia.*[122]

To a very large extent, these early dictionaries and the sources they used represented the subjective knowledge and interpretation of their compilers. They emphasised polite forms and described how a word ought to be used rather than its actual usage, a development in lexicography

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[117] Thomas Blount, *Glossographia Or a Dictionary: Interpreting All Such Hard Words ...* (London: Moseley, 1656).

[118] John Kersey, *A New English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (London: Robert Knaplock, 1713).

[119] Percy W. Long, 'English Dictionaries before Webster', *Papers (Bibliographical Society of America)*, 4.1 (1909), 25–43. Although written over a century ago, Long's classifications are still in current use.

[120] Politeness was frequently mentioned in the paratexts of dictionaries. For example, John Kersey referred to 'the Niceties of Polite Learning' in his *New English Dictionary*, p. ii.

[121] Edward Cocker, *Cocker's English Dictionary* (London: A. Back; A. Bettesworth, 1704).

[122] Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*.

that would not take place until the later nineteenth century.[123] Dictionaries were thus part of a more general movement towards prescription in writing that also included grammars, writing manuals and the standardisation of spelling. Works devoted to grammar became particularly popular, with some one hundred titles published in the first half of the century and four hundred in the second half.[124]

Dictionaries were heavily plagiarised. Both Blount and Edward Phillips accused each other of copying large parts of their texts in successive editions, and the entries for the various forms of OBLIGATION described in John Kersey's 1706 revision of Phillips' *New World of English Words* are almost identical to the anonymously authored revisions to Blount's *Glossographia* published in 1707.[125] Similarly, Samuel Johnson worked from a copy of Nathan Bailey's *Dictionary* in preparing his own dictionary of 1755, adding new words to the list and omitting others.[126] So common was this copying that it is possible to consider eighteenth-century dictionaries as almost collegiate efforts, jointly authored. Thus, in looking at the ways these dictionaries defined terms, they can be considered as representing a shared understanding of meanings and uses coupled with the distinctive voice of an individual lexicographer tailoring his work to a specific audience or particular purpose (pocket dictionary, technical lexicon, bookshelf reference, *etc*).

Eighteenth-century definitions of OBLIGATION and DUTY

Because dictionaries remained on bookshelves over very long periods, this survey needs to begin with the very first dictionaries published in the seventeenth century which were still consulted a century later. These 'hard word' dictionaries provided only the most perfunctory definitions of *oblige* and *duty* or omitted them completely, presumably because they were in sufficiently common usage that they were not considered to need explanation. Thus, William Bullokar (1616) and Henry Cockeram (1623) both omitted *duty* and both defined *oblige* simply as "to binde" (Cockeram possibly copying his definition from Bullokar) whilst Blount (1656) omitted both words.[127] Phillips (1658) chose to define the noun *obligation* as "a binding, Or obligeing ones self to any thing" whilst Elisha Coles (1676) was the first lexicographer to provide more detailed

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[123] John A. Simpson, 'Nathaniel Bailey and the Search for a Lexicographical Style', in *Lexicographers and Their Works*, ed. by James Gregory (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), pp. 189–90.

[124] Carey McIntosh, *The Evolution of English Prose, 1700-1800: Style, Politeness, and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 168–81.

[125] John Considine, 'In Praise of Edward Phillips', *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 132, 2015, 211–28.

[126] Long, 'English Dictionaries'.

[127] William Bullokar, *An English Expositor: Teaching the Interpretation of the Hardest Words Used in Our Language …* (London: John Legatt, 1616); Henry Cockeram, *The English Dictionarie of 1623* (New York: Huntingdon Press, 1930); Blount, *Glossographia*.

coverage by including a number of grammatical forms: "*Obligatory,* binding, also as; / *Obligation,* a binding, a bond conteining a penalty, with a condition annexed; / *Obligor,* he that enters into bond; / *Obligee,* to whom it is made"; Coles, again, gave no entry for *duty*.[128] Thus, these seventeenth-century definitions all focused on OBLIGATION as a bond or constraint.

When John Kersey edited the sixth edition of the Phillips dictionary in 1706 he expanded the definitions of obligation considerably, listing six inflections and describing additional meanings beyond that of a bond. He included a new sense of connectedness, "an Engagement arising from a Benefit conferr'd or received" and also social meanings, "to do a Kindness, good Turn, or Office" and "civil, courteous, kind, friendly". He defined *duty* as "any thing one is obliged to do" alongside other senses that emphasized taxation and military service.[129] As its name implies, John Harris' *Lexicon Technicum* (1710) focused on specialised legal meanings, categorising *obligation* as "Natural", "Civil" or "Mix'd".[130] Ephraïm Chambers described his *Cyclopædia* (1728) as "An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences", drawing on dictionaries and more specialized reference works. He copied both Harris' legal definitions and Kersey's financial senses for *obligation* and *duty*.[131] Nathan Bailey (1726) also considered his dictionary as universal, a claim he backed by the inclusion of "several 1000 English Words and Phrases, in no English Dictionary before extant".[132] His two quarto volumes (later combined into a single folio edition) covered the common definitions of *obligation* and *duty* but the third edition of the second volume (1737) included several additional philosophical categories of *obligation* (natural, civil, perpetual, and so on) which appear to have derived from a detailed reading of Samuel Pufendorf's *Law of Nature and Nations* (1672).[133]

Johnson's Dictionary (1755) was universal in another significant sense in its attempt to capture a wide range of uses to "ascertain the meaning of the English idiom … the words and phrases used in the general intercourse of life".[134] Despite these intentions, his extensive examples tended to be drawn rather more narrowly from "the works of those whom we commonly stile polite writers" rather than from common usage.[135] He covered both *obligation* and *duty* comprehensively,

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[128] Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words*, 3rd edn (London: Nathaniel Brooke, 1662); Elisha Coles, *An English Dictionary: Explaining the Difficult Terms That Are Used in Divinity, Husbandry, Physick, Philosophy, Law, Navigation, Mathematicks, and Other Arts and Sciences ...* (London: Peter Parker, 1677).

[129] John Kersey, *The New World of Words: Or, Universal English Dictionary ...* (London: Printed for J. Phillips, 1706).

[130] John Harris, *Lexicon Technicum: Or, An Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, Facsimile of 1710 edition, 2 vols (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966), II.

[131] Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*.

[132] Nathan Bailey, *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary: Comprehending the Derivations of the Generality of Words in the English Tongue ...*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Darby...[and 5 others], 1726) *Introduction*.

[133] Samuel Freiherr von Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* (Oxford: L. Litchfield, 1703).

[134] Samuel Johnson, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language: Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield* (Printed for J. and P. Knapton, T. Longman, and T. Shewell, 1747), p. 4.

[135] Johnson, *Plan*, p. 4.

including ten inflections of *obligation* and five inflections of *duty*, devoting some 738 words to them.[136] However, once the quotations from 'polite writers' are stripped out, his definitions of *obligation* are of similar length and add little to those of Kersey or Bailey other than to include a new meaning of the verb *to oblige*: "indebt; to lay obligations of gratitude". It is his treatment of *duty*, a word broadly ignored by earlier lexicographers, that demonstrates his care in capturing idiomatic meaning. Whilst the lexeme *duty* repeated technical contexts (tax, the military, the church *etc*), its inflections (*dutiful*, *duties, etc*) described three new senses: obedience, obsequiousness (in its eighteenth-century sense of willingness to serve) and respect.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1771), although advertised as a dictionary of arts and sciences, was intended to be a very different kind of reference work, providing both an alphabetical list explaining the meanings of straightforward terms and providing extended essays about more complex ideas. It therefore gave a straightforward definition of *duty* as a technical term but left out *obligation* in favour of a substantial essay of some 39 pages on moral philosophy which included sections entitled *Of Duty Or Moral Obligation*, (4 pages), *Duties to Society* (11 pages) and *Duty to God* (3 pages). This essay was an edited version of David Fordyce's *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1754).[137]

This short survey of dictionary definitions suggests that early lexicographers saw obligation in terms of a bond, promise or contract, whilst treatments of duty were confined to either taxation or the burdens of office. As the century wore on more socialised meanings began to be listed that emphasised the moral force and inter-personal aspects of these terms in creating bonds or maintaining them through complaisant acts. It would be tempting to conclude that these shifts represent actual changes in their normative meanings, and the use of eighteenth-century dictionaries to trace changing understandings across the century has academic precedents.[138] Indeed, Ute Frevert has argued strongly for the value of diachronic analysis of cultural terms in dictionaries and encyclopædiae as she sees them as having "an important standardising function: presenting definitions, distinguishing the important from the unimportant, and making

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[136] Johnson, *Dictionary*.

[137] *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Compiled by a Society of Gentlemen in Scotland*, ed. by William Smellie, 3 vols (London: John Donaldson, 1773), III, pp. 270–309; David Fordyce, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy, in Three Books with a Brief Account of the Nature, Progress, and Origin of Philosophy*, ed. by Thomas Kennedy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), pp. 7–161. Although a minor philosopher in terms of his ideas, David Fordyce's writings were very popular both as introductions to philosophy and as university textbooks, see M. A. Stewart, 'The Curriculum in Britain, Ireland, and the Colonies', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 97–120.

[138] For example, Karen Harvey's treatment of 'home' in 'Men Making Home: Masculinity and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century Britain.', *Gender & History*, 21.3 (2009), 520–40 (pp. 525–27).

judgements".[139] However, I suggest that interpreting results from early English dictionaries in this way can be problematic since they raise the question of whether we are tracing evolving understandings of a concept across the century or simply the development of the medium itself since, as the long eighteenth century progressed, dictionaries become more extensive both in terms of their coverage and their size so that more elaborate definitions became common. Ethan Shagan makes use of early modern dictionaries in his treatment of moderation but he, also, is cautious about over-interpreting them, taking care to explore how its definition was significantly extended in contemporary usage.[140]

We therefore need to look beyond dictionaries to explore how OBLIGATION and DUTY held meaning for people in the eighteenth century.

Scoping the language of obligation

The lexical works just considered show that obligation could be defined variously whilst ignoring very many forms and shades of meaning present in everyday writing. Taking as a single example Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) recounted the dilemmas faced by a young woman reconciling her romantic notions of love with the stipulation in her father's will that she should marry her cousin. In this 148,000-word novel, OBLIGATION occurs in various forms 150 times.[141] The work features several other key words which occurred frequently - *love* (169 times), *romance/romantic* (80 times), *father* (159 times), *daughter* (64 times) and *cousin* (251 times). In comparison, therefore, the 150 occurrences of variants of OBLIGATION can be seen as significant. However, unlike those other key words, its meanings were highly fluid. We have already met its first occurrence when it was used phatically in the book's dedication. The second occurrence is a requested action ("the Trust he had reposed in her, made him oblige her to give a Truce to her Mirth"), as is the next occurrence. Then follows an appeal to moral duty ("his Respect and Submission to my Commands will oblige him to Silence"). It could also mean cause to happen ("The Noise he made, in approaching her, obliged her at last to look up"), or force ("a Lover, whose Aim was to take away her Liberty, either by obliging her to marry him, or by making her a Prisoner"). It could refer to commitment ("he certainly loves me but little; and I am the less obliged to him") or levels of acceptability ("I blush for the Rudeness you have been guilty of; but endeavour to repair

[139] Ute Frevert, 'Defining Emotions: Concepts and Debates over Three Centuries', in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), particularly pp.8-9.
[140] Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 10–18.
[141] Lennox, *The Female Quixote*.

it, by a more obliging Behaviour for the future") or it could imply complaisance ("desire him, in the most obliging manner you can, to return"); all of these distinct meanings occur in the first 20 pages of the novel. It is also worth noting that its simile DUTY occurs in the novel only 11 times, used in the single sense of 'a required or expected course of action', for example, "we have only acted conformable to our Duty".

Obligation was, therefore, an extremely malleable concept, one which could convey a range of subtle variations of meaning. Given the popularity of Lenox's novel, these intricate shifts in meaning must also have been readily understood by her readers, but it is risky to draw too many conclusions from a single work and, to test out the most common usages, we need to explore a variety of authors representing different kinds of writing. The remainder of this chapter will examine in detail how the language of obligation was used in very many texts taken from a wide range of genres. Whilst novels, plays or conduct manuals might employ different registers, each must convey its meaning plainly and in ways acceptable to the audience. It is therefore at least plausible that word usage on the page or on the stage was part of the active vocabulary of its audience and, if the same meanings and uses are found across multiple texts and genres, we can safely assume that they provide us with valuable information about common understandings.

Exploring lexical meaning through corpus linguistics

To reach reliable conclusions about the conceptual content of words and usage, it is important to gather very large numbers of examples from diverse kinds of writing, and those examples then need to be analysed and tested against similar types of concept to establish the extent to which they represented typical behaviours. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the body of works contained in the ECCO-TCP subset of Eighteenth Century Collections Online (described in the previous chapter).

The grammars of obligation

Obligation or *duty* were mentioned in so many different contexts and with so many senses that, to understand their use, we must first make the task more manageable by considering their different grammatical forms. In its current form, ECCO-TCP does not allow for grammatical analyses as simple word searches conflate different parts of speech, for example, *obliging* can be a verb, an adjective or, rarely, a noun. It was therefore necessary to prepare an encoded version of the ECCO-

TCP dataset to incorporate part-of-speech tags (POS tags) and this was done automatically using Lawrence Anthony's TagAnt program.[142]

Duty

Duty is the more straightforward case as it had limited meanings and a simpler grammar, occurring in only three forms: as a noun (singular or plural), as an adjective and as an adverb with frequencies (including variant spellings) as follows (Table 2):[143]

Table 2: Occurrences of the various word forms of DUTY in ECCO-TCP

Noun singular duty, dutifulness	**Noun plural** duties	**Adjective** dutiful, dutious, undutiful	**Adverb** dutifully, undutifully
13,608	4,514	953 *(undutiful 199)*	69 *(undutifully 11)*

Both the adjectival and adverbial forms conveyed a limited range of meanings concerning obedience, respectfulness and mindfulness of one's obligations and it is therefore unsurprising that, among the 1,000 mentions of *dutiful* or *dutifully*, many involved a family member, with *son/daughter/s/child/ren* co-occurring 202 times, *father/mother/parent/s* 40 times and *husband/s/wife/wives* 27 times.[144] These pairings were often accompanied by emotional colouring; for example, a dutiful son or daughter was likely to be *affectionate*, *amiable* or *obedient*, a dutiful father or mother could be *indulgent*, *tender* or occasionally *obdurate*, a husband *faithful*, *tender* or a *tyrant* and a wife *affectionate* or *obliging*. Generally, *dutiful* implied a loving and respectful relationship, whilst undutiful was often linked with other forms of negative behaviour - *unkind*, *ungrateful* or *unnatural*. Notably, *dutiful* was used rarely in relation to more distant relatives, with *uncle/aunt/cousin/s* occurring just nine times, *brother/sister/s* four times and references to grandparents or grandchildren twice; neither was it used much in relation to *friend/s,* with only seven co-occurrences.

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[142] Laurence Anthony, 'TagAnt (Version 1.2.0)' (Tokyo: Waseda University, 2015) <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/ software/tagant/> [accessed 9 April 2018]. TagAnt employs the 'TreeTagger' tag-set, based on the work of Helmut Schmidt, see Helmut Schmid, 'Probabilistic Part-of-Speech Tagging Using Decision Trees', in *Proceedings of the International Conference on New Methods in Language Processing* (Manchester, UK, 1994); Because TagAnt does not recognise the common early eighteenth-century contractions of past tense verbs indicated by 'd (I am asham'd, she suffer'd), such contractions were converted to standard form before tagging and then restored afterwards. This was carried out using Eric Popivker's, 'Find & Replace Tool'.

[143] The minor discrepancy between this table and Table 1 in Chapter 1 represents technical terms (*eg feu-duty*), spelling variants (*eg dutie)*, rare grammatical usages (*eg duty* acting as a verb or adjective) and undefined part-of-speech attributions.

[144] In this thesis co-occurrence is defined as existing where two terms occur within five words of each other in a text.

Another group of terms that co-occur with *dutiful* related to monarchy, with 'royal' terms (*king, queen, majesty, prince/ss*) appearing 41 times, often alongside *humble*, *loyal* or *obedient*. *Servant/s* co-occurs 33 times (but *maid* or *housekeeper* never), often accompanied by *devoted* or *obedient*. Interestingly, most associations between *dutiful* and *servant* related to the wish to be of service to an equal rather than to a master/servant relationship (as in, for example, "I am, Sir, Your dutiful and ever obliged Servant"). *Dutiful* was often paired with at least one other adjective, the most common being *affectionate* (35 times), and it was frequently used in letter-valedictions, often followed by *loyal* (22), *humble* (19) and *obedient* (17 times). There were 74 examples of *your dutiful* appearing in valedictions.

Thus, *dutiful* and *dutifully* most frequently occurred as descriptors of affectionate family relationships or as polite social affiliations, sometimes towards people in positions of power but more often among peers. It was also frequently used in dedications and valedictions. Most of these usages appear to have been formulaic, repeatedly following a common pattern - perhaps based on a common perception that dutiful behaviour was part of what constituted a good parent, good child or good citizen.

Turning now to the noun form, one immediate observation is that the plural *duties* operated over a more restricted repertoire than its singular version *duty*, the plural form rarely conveying meanings concerning human qualities or moral expectations but acting instead as a synonym for tasks, roles or taxes. For example, John Dennis wrote in 1704 "…there are Duties in this Religion, which cannot be worthily perform'd without the assistance of Poetry. As the offering up Praise and Thanksgiving and several sorts of Pray'r to God".[145] The singular form might occasionally also describe a task, but it was mainly used in more abstract terms, as in John Trusler's description of "that quota of love and benevolence to the common stock which duty and religion required of them".[146]

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[145] John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry: Contain'd in Some New Discoveries Never Made Before,…* (London: Geo. Strahan, 1704), p. 117.
[146] John Trusler, *The Habitable World Described* (London: The author, 1788), p. 237.

This difference in emphasis is underlined if we examine the most frequent nouns with which *duties* and *duty* collocate (Table 3).[147] The majority of collocates of *duties* reflected either areas of activity (life, religion, station, *etc*) or taxation (customs, goods, importation) whilst those for *duty* related mainly to relationships or abstract ideas. Since all the plural uses (other than specific technical terms such as *feu-duties*, used 14 times) can also be found in the singular form, the rest of this analysis will treat both forms together.

Table 3: Most frequent nouns collocating with *duties* and *duty* in descending order

duties	life, religion, customs, goods, station, office, man, performance, men, importation, salt, england, time, excise, trade
duty	man, god, love, affection, interest, father, king, honour, performance, gratitude, children, men, time, parents, country

Among the 18,000 instances of the three noun forms, 873 co-occurred with words that suggested taxation (customs, excise, import, export, pay, port, tax, toll) although nearly half of these were in just two decades (the 1710s and 1770s) probably as a result of taxation difficulties following the Act of Union in the 1710s and taxation again became a vexed issue during the colonial crisis in the 1770s. Another 546 co-occurrences had religious connotations whilst 457 others related to the responsibilities of a spouse, parent or child. There were 247 references to the duties attached to country or citizenship (for example, Edmund Burke's "the sphere of my duties is my true country"),[148] and a further 148 reflected military uses. However, these are relatively sparse in comparison with the total incidence of the noun forms and they are dwarfed by more abstract senses of the term. This becomes more apparent when considering *duty* followed by a preposition (to, on, by *etc*) which occurs 7,500 times (40% of all noun occurrences), with *duty to* alone being used 2,250 times. Most of the instances of *duty to* were followed by a substantive verb (1,175 times) indicating a moral imperative and implying, for example, an appeal to conscience in such phrases as *duty to … obey, resist, accomplish, love, exhort*, and so on. When *duty* was followed by other propositions meanings could be more varied - most of the 300 occurrences of *duty on* concerned taxation, but *duty of* (2,675 occurrences) and *duty by* (200 occurrences) mainly suggested moral or other compulsion.

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[147] Collocations are words that appear more frequently than would be expected within a fixed distance of the key word. This paper uses the standards typical of such studies: collocate-distance of five words to the left or right of the key word, employing the Log-Likelihood statistical test set at LL>6.63. For an explanation of collocation, see McEnery and Hardie, *Corpus Linguistics*, pp. 122–33.

[148] Edmund Burke, *A Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq. at the Guildhall, in Bristol: Previous to the Late Election in That City Upon Certain Points Relative to His Parliamentary Conduct* (London: J. Dodsley, 1780), p. 13.

To summarise these findings, *duty* in its various forms had some technical meanings associated with taxation (the main definition given in dictionaries of the period), but these had only limited use in wider writing. Here, the meanings divided into a minor use concerning the tasks associated with a role and a major use associated with either honour-relationships towards a person or belief-relationships towards an idea (God, moral codes, family *etc*).

These non-technical senses of DUTY were also associated with OBLIGATION and examples can be found of *obligation* being used in precisely the same way, for example, to describe the tasks of a position or role, as in Hannah Moore's "she acquits herself of her religious obligations by her mere weekly oblation of prayer" (comparable with John Dennis' use of *duty* given above).[149] However *duty* differed from *obligation* in one important respect - its meanings and uses were relatively stable, with very little variation in meaning across its broad categories. *Obligation*, which we will now turn to, had very fluid meanings, encompassing many of *duty's* senses but extending well beyond them.

Obligation

Eighteenth-century dictionaries, taken together, ascribed five distinct meanings to the various word forms of OBLIGATION: a covenant or promise, a formal or informal bond, coercive force, gratitude, and civility, yet we saw in the example of Lennox' *Female Quixote* eight different senses in her first twenty pages. This section will explore how the term could shift its meaning in different contexts or at the hands of different writers. This is, though, still a focus on lexical meanings, leaving a discussion of the discursive power of the term to Chapter 5.

A significant factor in giving *obligation* its fluidity was the interplay between its different core meanings and the wide number of grammatical forms it could take (Table 4). Setting aside rare formulations (*eg*., *obligant*), eighteenth-century writers called on three noun forms (obligation, obligingness and the verbal-noun obliging), three adjectives (obliged, obliging, obligatory), one

Table 4: Occurrences of the word forms of OBLIGATION in ECCO-TCP

Nouns obligation, obligations, obliging, obligingness	Adjectives obliging, obliged, oblig'd, obligatory	Adverb obligingly	Verbs Oblige, obliged, oblig'd, obliging
4,585 (19%) *(disobligation/ing/er/s 32)*	1,619 (7%) *(disobliging 42)*	180 (1%) *(disobligingly 1)*	17,517 (73%) *(disoblige/d/s/ing 388)*

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[149] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education: With a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune : In Two Volumes* (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1799), p. 237.

adverb (obligingly), and two verbs (obligate, oblige). This last was by far the most frequent form and was itself richly diverse, occurring transitively, intransitively, reflexively, actively, passively and as a gerund. Its meanings could also shift greatly by the addition of prepositions (compare, for example, *being obliged to* with *being obliged by*). The power and flexibility of the term also came from the finely gradated ways it was used, stretching from the lightest of social contexts, for example, "Upon my Entrance, every one rose, and very obligingly proffered me a Seat" to the most portentous, "By exacting the death of Christ for our redemption he has made an awful declaration of the sacred obligation of his laws in the gospel".[150] We will explore the thematic threads that run through these very diverse uses.

Although the least numerous, the adjectives and adverbs introduce us to an important meaning not present in *duty*, that of complaisance, the wish to be agreeable or helpful to others or, as Thomas Blount expressed it, the "delight, pleasure, fulness of, or fellowship in joy".[151] Complaisance has been seen by some scholars as an indication of superficially polite behaviour among both men and women suggestive of an eagerness to please but which might sometimes be resonant with flattery and insincerity, but this is not how obliging behaviour was viewed by eighteenth-century authors.[152] For them, the adjectival *obliging* was used only to indicate positive behaviours and was frequently linked with another term of approbation such as *affable and obliging*, *civil and obliging*, *obliging and courteous*; nearly half of the 600 adjectival mentions of *obliging* were preceded or followed by *and*. Typical of its use is Eliza Berkeley's comment on how "Mr Berkeley … took an affectionate, a grateful, last farewell of all his amiable friends and obliging neighbours".[153] *Obliging* could mean helpful, willing, pleasant, compliant or unaffected and it was used invariably in relation to others - it was an entirely sociable form. These senses set it apart from the far less common *obligatory* (used 82 times, all in formal texts) which carried its modern connotations of 'required' and described an imposed action or condition, as in "The engagements in which we are bound to the body of society are obligatory only because they are mutual".[154]

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[150] Aaron Hill, *The Plain Dealer: Being Select Essays on Several Curious Subjects*, 2 vols (London: Printed for S. Richardson, and A. Wilde, 1730), II, no. 11; Alexander Gerard, *Sermons, by Alexander Gerard, D.D. …* (Charles Dilly, 1780), II.

[151] Blount, *Glossographia*.

[152] Carter, *Polite Society*, pp. 64, 74, 188; Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 200; Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), pp. 53, 83, 226, etc; For a more thorough critique of the language of complaisance, see Markku Peltonen, 'Politeness and Whiggism, 1688-1732', *The Historical Journal*, 48.2 (2005), 391–414 (pp. 398–405).

[153] George Monck Berkeley, *Poems: By the Late George-Monck Berkeley, Esq. … With a Preface by the Editor, Consisting of Some Anecdotes of Mr. Monck Berkeley and Several of His Friends.*, ed. by Eliza Berkeley, 2007.

[154] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Treatise on the Social Compact: Or The Principles of Politic Law* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1764), p. 46.

Obliged in its adjectival form was almost as common as *obliging* but it had a greater range of meanings. It was again used in the sense of complaisance, frequently linked with another term of esteem such as *faithful and obliged* or *obliged and affectionate* (a third of all uses). However, very many occurrences were valedictory, as in "I am Your obliged Admirer and Friend, Polly Darnford" and over half of mentions of *obliged* as an adjective were used at the end of letters, usually emphasising the wish to be of service. [155] For example, William Shenstone frequently ended letters to his friends with variations of the formula "Your obliged and very faithful servant".[156] Such letter endings were, of course, formulaic but, unlike modern constructions such as 'Yours sincerely', they were highly variable and frequently tailored to the recipient - Shenstone rarely used the same precise formula more than once in his 91 published letters.

These very frequent uses of *obliged* or *obliging* in phrases such as 'your obliged and devoted sister' or 'his obliging letter' appear almost phatic in that they added very little content and could be omitted without loss of lexical meaning. Eighteenth-century writing often appears to modern eyes to be over-endowed with superficial circumlocutory language of this kind, yet it played a crucially important function in providing colour, mood and affect. In such contexts, *obliging* references were essentially extra-textual, conveying social and relational information that reminded both speaker and listener of their shared cultural contexts, outlooks and interests - they were a form of oblique communication in which "ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words".[157] The subtle distinctions conveyed by William Shenstone in his choices of valediction, and the fact that he made such choices, suggests that they were meaningful to him and his correspondents in ways that are now lost to us, but they do suggest that the frequent use of the ideals of obligation in such contexts served to emphasise bonds of allegiance and devotion. The subtlety of such choices could present problems for the inexperienced and the young Dudley Ryder, writing to his querulous Uncle Marshall about his grandmother's affairs confessed himself "perplexed about what title to give him: at last called him 'Honoured Sir ' and subscribed myself his obedient nephew and humble servant".[158]

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[155] Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 399.

[156] William Shenstone, *Letters to Particular Friends: By William Shenstone, Esq; from the Year 1739 to 1763* (Dublin: H. Saunders and other booksellers, 1770).

[157] B Malinowski, 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages', in *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), pp. 296–336 (p. 315); Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics', in *Style in Language*, ed. by Thomas A Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1975), pp. 350–77 (pp. 355–56).

[158] Dudley Ryder, *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715 -1716*, ed. by William Matthews (London: Methuen, 1939), p. 66.

Given the emphasis of the dictionary definitions of the period, it is somewhat surprising that there are few examples of *obliged* being used in the sense of 'incurring an obligation'. Ascriptions of indebtedness or expectation to the word *obliged* in dictionary definitions may therefore be a throwback to seventeenth-century usage because, in the eighteenth century, this meaning appears to have all but disappeared - it belonged pre-eminently to the noun form *obligation* in any contexts that implied a liability which might need to be repaid.

The noun *obligation* could refer to a specific task, action, physical debt or favour that might be squared, and was found in both formal contexts concerning a contractual duty and also more informally, such as when the then Elector of Hanover asked the Earl of Rochester to intercede with Queen Anne, "You can never confer a more sensible obligation upon me since I consider the honour of her friendship as the most valuable of all her advantages. I shall be very happy to owe that obligation to a person of your merit for whom I have so particular a regard".[159] However, its most common application described a general duty towards individuals (parents, friends, patrons, *etc*) or to an ideal such as *mankind*, *family* or *justice*. This is most easily seen by considering the substantive collocates of *obligation*, those words that occurred alongside it with more than expected frequency (Table 5):

Table 5: Most frequent substantive terms collocating with *obligation/s*

Obligation	moral, law, gratitude, nature, virtue, justice, property, god, mutual, state, obedience, duties, religion, public, covenant
Obligations	moral, virtue, family, gratitude, nature, world, god, duty, honour, religion, public, pecuniary, lord, king, morality

These collocates generally represent abstract notions rather than specifics and concern themselves in the main with matters of principle. Communal terms such as *world*, *man* or *public* frequently referenced the social scope of obligation (as in "the world is under some obligation", "the obligation of every man to maintain his children" or "the divinity of truth and the sacred obligation of public good"), whilst more specific collocates ascribed the nature of obligation as directed towards morality, God, law, family, and so on.[160]

So far, the different grammatical forms have highlighted different senses, but it is the verb form that demonstrates the versatility of the conceptual frame in which *oblige* operated, and it was

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[159] *Original Papers: Containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration, to the Accession of the House of Hannover*, ed. by James Macpherson (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1775), II, p. 194.
[160] Preface, Alexander Pope, *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq: Juvenile Poems*, ed. by Mr Warburton (J. and P. Knapton, 1752), p. xiii; Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 200; Thomas Spence, *Pigs' Meat, or, Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* (London: Printed for T. Spence ..., 1795), p. 192.

by far the most populous form, with verbs contributing 73% of all occurrences. As has already been remarked, it could take on many voices and structures, and eighteenth-century writers were able to communicate the sense they wished to employ through the grammatical choices they made. *Oblige* could take any of the meanings that we have encountered simply by altering the preposition, for example, the verbal phrase *oblige him to*, expressed an element of compulsion in contrast to *oblige him by*, expressing complaisance. The construction *oblige to* followed by a verb (*eg.*, "he was obliged to go" or "she obliged him to confess") comprised fully 62% of occurrences of the verb forms of OBLIGE. It always implied a required or coercive element (similar in use to the modern-day *must* or *have to*) although the source of that requirement could vary and might imply, for example, desirable behaviour, social expectation, force of circumstance, moral compulsion or legal or contractual duty. When *oblige* was followed by a different preposition it frequently suggested inclination, pleasure, encouragement or an element of choice. *Obliged by* was used in two distinct modes: pleasure, as in "Mr Sutton felt himself so obliged by her conduct",[161] or, again, compulsion, for example, "the chancellor is obliged by law to send it him immediately".[162]

Obligation in all its forms thus provided a very flexible repertoire of meanings. Minor usage emphasised restrictions that derived from worldly affairs or submission to a set of rules, although the constraints it described usually related either to moral codes or affective attachment, implying compliance either because one ought to or because it felt the right thing to do. Finally, and increasingly, obligation was also used to emphasise the pleasures of association - being obliging towards others for its own sake. Other than in the minority of cases when the subject was governed by external rules, obligations were either appeals to the conscience or references to social interaction - they defined either the autonomous self or the self in relation to others.

In this section, we have rehearsed the lexical range of *obligation* and *duty*, their meanings and grammars. The next section will turn to semantic questions and examine what parallel notions eighteenth-century writers were conveying in using these terms.

The semantic field

So far, inferences have been drawn from the ways that key words were used in sentences by historical players, exploring the choices they made in framing both the language of obligation and the other key words they accompanied. This has essentially been a lexical analysis. A second approach examines semantic significance, focusing not on the linguistic company words kept but

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[161] Berkeley, *Poems*.
[162] Macpherson, *Original Papers*, II.

rather on words that shared similar linguistic company - here we are interested in finding other terms that behaved in similar ways to *duty* and *obligation*, and which appeared in similar contexts, for example in discussion of familial relationships. These commonalities include similarities of meaning and usage, but also other kinds of semantic connection. The principle here is that if two words usually occur in very similar contexts then there is a semantic relationship between them reflecting Firth's maxim quoted earlier, "you shall know a word by the company it keeps".[163]

A key idea in this approach is that of the semantic field. Semantic field theory posits that the lexicon (the total set of words available to us) is structured around clusters of closely related concepts so that each word obtains its meaning in relation to other words within the cluster.[164] It is therefore possible to delineate and define an idea by exploring its semantic field, employing various methods to generate the field associated with the key term. Although useful as a theoretical model, semantic field theory suffers through both the lack of agreed definitions and competing methodologies: some researchers define the field strictly in terms of individual words that have similar meanings, some happily include phrases with similar meanings and others encompass other forms of semantic connection such as antonyms or hypernyms.[165]

In computational semantics, the term has taken on new significance because machine learning methods can reveal an even wider range of conceptual connections between terms.[166] For example, it is unsurprising that *obligation* should belong to the same semantic field as *duty* since they are near-synonyms, but it is less immediately obvious why, in the eighteenth century, *restriction* might also belong to *obligation*'s semantic field and behave in similar ways until we remember that the most common eighteenth-century dictionary definition of *to oblige* was 'to bind, constrain or engage' - machine methodologies can reveal this element of constraint or restriction in eighteenth-century usage that might not otherwise be recognised. Another advantage of such machine technologies is that they are 'unsupervised', that is, the program is given no instruction as to what constitutes 'better' or 'worse' answers - there is no researcher guidance and the program simply

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[163] Firth, 'Linguistic Theory', p. 11.

[164] Alfio Gliozzo, 'Semantic Domains and Linguistic Theory', in *Proceedings of the LREC 2006 Workshop*, 2006; For an extended example of the power of the semantic field, see Brad Pasanek, *Metaphors of Mind: An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

[165] Jef Verschueren, 'Problems of Lexical Semantics', *Lingua*, 53.4 (1981), 317–51 (pp. 327–30); Howard Jackson, *Lexicography: An Introduction.* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 16–17; Dirk Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 56–64.

[166] Magnus Sahlgren, 'The Distributional Hypothesis', *Italian Journal of Linguistics*, 20.1 (2008), 33–54 (pp. 327–30); Elia Bruni, Nam Khanh Tran, and Marco Baroni, 'Multimodal Distributional Semantics', *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, 48 (2013), 47 (pp. 1–7).

exposes any underlying word relationships existing in the corpus. This ensures that any cultural content is preserved, helpful to the researcher but potentially controversial in other contexts.[167]

The term 'semantic field' will, therefore, be employed in this extended sense to describe those words that performed most similarly to our key concepts, and the following analysis will rely heavily on a machine intelligence technique called word vector modelling.[168] The approach analyses all key words in a large corpus and places them in mathematical relationship with each other depending on the frequency with which they appear together in the corpus. These multiple relationships are then converted into positions in a multi-dimensional vector space in which words that perform in semantically similar ways are placed close together.[169] Effectively, if two words appear close together in the vector field it would be possible to replace one with the other in a relevant sentence and still make sense (though not necessarily identical sense). By examining these proximities, additional information about those terms and the relationships between them can be revealed. This is illustrated in Figure 6, which pictorially represents the portion of ECCO-TCP vector space occupied by 'king' and its fifteen nearest neighbours (that is, words that behaved most like *king* in eighteenth-century texts). Because this particular model projects words into 100-dimensional space, the figure is a highly simplified projection of the space into two dimensions.[170]

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[167] One such controversy is described by Hannah Devlin in 'AI Programs Exhibit Racial and Gender Biases, Research Reveals', *The Guardian*, 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/13/ai-programs-exhibit-racist-and-sexist-biases-research-reveals> [accessed 26 April 2017].

[168] A branch of natural language processing sometimes also referred to as Word Embedding, Distributional Semantic Modelling or Distributed Representation.

[169] For a fuller technical explanation, see, for instance Mikolov and others, 'Distributed Representations'; Bruni, Tran, and Baroni, 'Multimodal Distributional Semantics'; Fabre and Lenci, 'Distributional Semantics Today Introduction to the Special Issue'; Hendrik Heuer, 'Text Comparison Using Word Vector Representations and Dimensionality Reduction', in *Proceedings of the Eighth European Conference on Python In Science*, 2016.

[170] The diagram was generated using a simple Python routine from data generated from word2vec.

Figure 6: Vector space model of 'king' and its near neighbours in ECCP-TCP
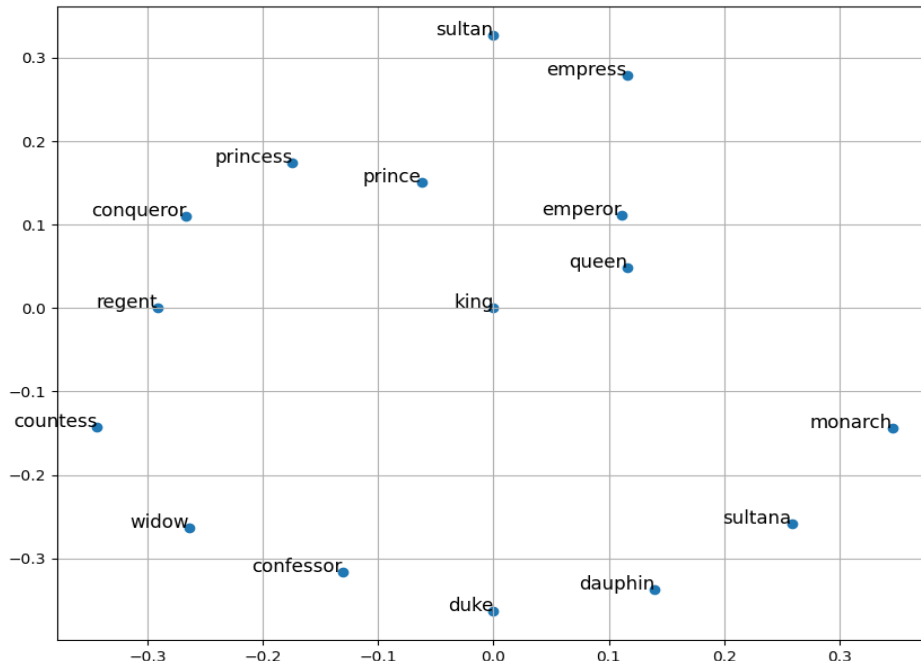
The particular approach in this thesis relies on a program, *word2vec*, that emerged from Google Labs in 2013 and was then incorporated into a vector space modelling programme, *Gensim*, developed by Radim Řehůřek and Petr Sojka.[171] This program operates on a corpus to generate the terms that behave most similarly to any key word or group of words and, as we will see, also permits more complex inter-relationships to be investigated. As previously mentioned, the program does not operate directly on the corpus but on a pre-prepared mathematical model of the corpus. Fortunately, Ryan Heuser has constructed just such a model for ECCO-TCP and his model is used for the study in this section.[172]

[171] Tomas Mikolov and others, 'Efficient Estimation of Word Representations in Vector Space', in *International Conference on Learning Representations* (arXiv:1301.3781 [cs.CL], 2013); Radim Řehůřek and Petr Sojka, 'Gensim - Software Framework for Topic Modelling with Large Corpora', in *Proceedings of the LREC 2010 Workshop on New Challenges for NLP Frameworks* (Valletta, Malta: ELRA, 2010), pp. 45–50. For this thesis, Gensim was operated within an iPython environment in the Enthought Canopy python distribution suite of programs, 'Enthought Canopy' (Austin, Texas: Enthought, 2018) <http://www.enthought.com>.

[172] 'Word2Vec Model of ECCO-TCP (80 Million Words; Skip-Gram Size of 5 Words)', 2016 <http://ryanheuser.org/word-vectors/> [accessed 6 November 2017] Heuser utilises a later version of ECCO-TCP than that used elsewhere in this thesis which contains 2,350 texts, 84m words.

Semantic fields of obligation and duty

Applying the technique first to occurrences of DUTY and OBLIGATION in ECCO-TCP, Table 6 lists the thirty 'nearest neighbours' to each of the word forms (those words that are positioned closest in the vector space), effectively defining their semantic fields.

Table 6: Semantic fields of *duty* and *obligation* in the ECCO-TCP corpus
(most congruent/discongruent first)

\<duty\>
'obedience', 'duties', 'allegiance', 'service', 'obligation', 'business', 'profession', 'honour', 'office', 'gratitude', 'function', 'fidelity', 'welfare', 'debt', 'interest', 'task', 'virtue', 'kindness', 'attention', 'observance', 'humanity', 'friendship', 'belief', 'affection', 'consciences', 'charge', 'obligations', 'capacity', 'vocation', 'happiness'.
\<duties\>
'debts', 'offices', 'obligations', 'taxes', 'functions', 'employments', 'restraints', 'duty', 'expences', 'burthens', 'prohibitions', 'engagements', 'conditions', 'impositions', 'burdens', 'services', 'imposts', 'privileges', 'dues', 'satisfactions', 'benefits', 'funds', 'obligation', 'civilities', 'visitations', 'institutions', 'observances', 'contributions', 'formalities', 'limitations'.
\<dutiful\>
'affectionate', 'compassionate', 'condescending', 'submissive', 'faithful', 'courteous', 'vertuous', 'complaisant', 'loyal', 'sincere', 'devout', 'obliging', 'punctual', 'amiable', 'confidential', 'respectful', 'disinterested', 'discreet', 'considerate', 'communicative', 'bountiful', 'generous', 'amiably', 'affable', 'obedient', 'magnanimous', 'zealous', 'meek', 'endearing', 'benevolent'.
\<dutifully\>
'cheerfully', 'joyfully', 'submissively', 'fervently', 'affectionately', 'piously', 'disinterestedly', 'courteously', 'cordially', 'chearfully', 'punctually', 'thankfully', 'honorably', 'ceremoniously', 'respectfully', 'urgently', 'graciously', 'loyally', 'extraordinarily', 'civilly', 'reluctantly', 'straitly', 'imprudently', 'atrociously', 'politely', 'servently',* 'sacredly', 'royally', 'importunately', 'hospitably'.
\<obligation\>
'obligations', 'injunction', 'injury', 'duty', 'obedience', 'inducement', 'debt', 'observance', 'acknowledgment', 'oath', 'affirmation', 'consideration', 'duties', 'restraint', 'incumbrance', 'dependence', 'authority', 'assurance', 'burthen', 'grievance', 'restriction', 'objection', 'evidence', 'disadvantage', 'charge', 'submission', 'contribution', 'allegiance', 'criminality', 'dependance'.
\<obligations\>
'obligation', 'benefits', 'civilities', 'duties', 'debts', 'commendations', 'favours', 'services', 'indignities', 'kindnesses', 'advantages', 'engagements', 'disadvantages', 'injuries', 'afflictions', 'attentions', 'provocations', 'encomiums', 'injunctions', 'charities', 'excellencies', 'condescensions', 'burthens', 'favors', 'blessings', 'deference', 'inducements', 'kindness', 'discouragements', 'offences'.
\<oblige\>
'compel', 'undeceive', 'encourage', 'intitle', 'recommend', 'attach', 'supplant', 'perswade', 'induce', 'disoblige', 'persuade', 'mortify', 'entrust', 'satisfie', 'assist', 'advise', 'deceive', 'enable', 'intimidate', 'reinstate', 'permit', 'admonish', 'accompany', 'reconcile', 'reclaim', 'constrain', 'displease', 'disappoint', 'remind', 'instruct'.
\<obliged\>
'oblig'd', 'compelled', 'forced', 'constrained', 'necessitated', 'permitted', 'tempted', 'determined', 'resolved', 'inclined', 'accustomed', 'forc'd', 'enabled', 'resolv'd', 'unable', 'willing', 'able', 'induced', 'wont', 'empowered', 'compell'd', 'allowed', 'preparing', 'unwilling', 'advised', 'ready', 'determin'd', 'disposed', 'refused', 'inclin'd'.
\<obliging\>
'complaisant', 'engaging', 'inviting', 'condescending', 'courteous', 'affable', 'respectful', 'affectionate', 'communicative', 'dutiful', 'unreserved', 'agreeable', 'accommodating', 'promising', 'entertaining', 'polite', 'submissive', 'punctual', 'importunate', 'sociable', 'diverting', 'disobliging', 'pressing', 'peremptory', 'amiable', 'flattering', 'acceptable', 'indiscreet', 'considerate', 'affecting'.

* servent/ly is a common OCR mis-transcription for fervent/ly

The analysis in the previous section noted that the singular and plural forms of *duty* often had slightly different lexical meanings and their semantic fields (shown in the table) confirm this, with *duty* being more closely connected to positive abstract terms such as *obedience*, *honour* and *fidelity* whilst *duties* belonged to a more worldly semantic field connected to finance or the burdens attached to a role. The singular *duty* also reveals connotations with the positive passions that were not apparent in the previous discussion, being grouped with such words as *gratitude*, *kindness*, *affection*, and *happiness.* The lexical examination of *dutiful* pointed to meanings associated with moral compliance but its semantic field suggests an additional range of emotions that certainly includes *submissive* and *devout* but also suggests that usage frequently stressed the sentimental ties of affection, compassion and other positive virtues, whist *dutifully* generates unfailingly positive emotional terms.

There were again distinctions between the singular and plural uses of *obligation,* the singular form demonstrating close association with compliance and the plural aligning more closely to social interactions. As we would now expect, the semantic field surrounding the verb *oblige* is diverse, reflecting the range of meanings and contexts in which it was used, but *obliged* (conflating its verbal and adjectival forms) implied a stronger sense of compulsion (highlighting the dominance of the verb form *obliged to*). The appearance of some terms in the semantic field of *obliged* are difficult to fathom today but others can be explained by reference to the contexts in which they were used. For example, *intitle/entitle* could be employed in eighteenth-century speech as an inverse of *obliged*, taking the meaning of 'requiring others to oblige you', as in "Mr. H. knows that his birth and family intitle him more to the block, than the rope".[173] Similarly, *mortify* was often used to suggest the severe embarrassment resulting when a person had not acted in accordance with his or her obligations or met others' expectations (*eg*., "Humility exalts, but pride mortifies us").[174] Finally, the adjectival *obliging* yields a homogeneous set of socially desirable terms along with their antonyms. This brief analysis thus highlights a consistent theme that, with the exceptions of *duties* and *obliged to,* all forms of both DUTY and OBLIGATION contained a significant affective element related to the emotional ties that people had either to others or towards ideals.

The Uses of vector arithmetic

Because the methodology behind word vector modelling renders each key term mathematically, it is possible to exploit vector arithmetic to explore the interaction between

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[173] Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 360.
[174] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: A Critical Edition*, ed. by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p. 193.

different concepts, revealing the connections between words by 'adding' two vectors together or exposing their differences through vector subtraction. For example, we can use the idea of analogies to explore the solution to the question "man is to king as woman is to …?" suggested by Tolga Bolukbasi and others.[175] In vector arithmetic this becomes

<div align="center">

<king> − <man> + <woman>

</div>

where ***<name>*** indicates the word-vector and ***+*** and ***−*** are vector operators.

The operation removes male connotations from *king* and then adds female connotations and we can then seek out which words are closest to the result. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 7 depicting firstly the removal of 'maleness' from *king* and then replacing it with 'femaleness'. The nearest word to the result in the ECCO-TCP corpus is, unsurprisingly 'queen' followed, at some distance, by 'emperor', 'prince', and 'princess'. The value of this approach can be powerfully demonstrated by exploring the gendered content of *duty* and *obligation*.

Figure 7: man is to king as woman is to ?
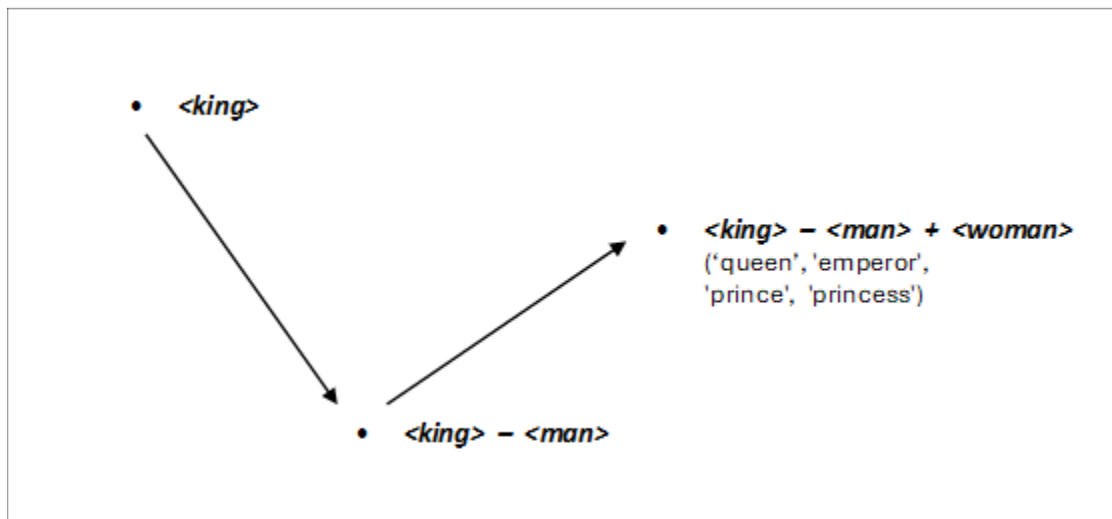
Gender

Faced with an overabundance of information (with some 45,000 examples in ECCO-TCP to choose from) it can be difficult to make general statements about how the language of obligation is affected by the gender of the writer, recipient or subject – that is, whether eighteenth-century

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[175] For a technical account of the methodology, see Tolga Bolukbasi and others, 'Man Is to Computer Programmer as Woman Is to Homemaker? Debiasing Word Embeddings', in *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, 2016, pp. 4349–57.

usages embedded differing attitudes to men and women. However, word vector modelling can provide one kind of insight, at least with regard to gendering within the text, by exploring the circumstances where male or female terms interact with 'obliging' terms. The approach removes any male connotations from the word vector and then associates the result with female connotations. This exposes a feminised semantic field that can be explored, whilst reversing the operation exposes male connotations, the vector operations being:

Feminised constructions: *<oblige> − <man> + <woman>*

Masculinised constructions: *<oblige> − <woman> + <man>*

where *<name>* indicates the word-vector and *+* and *−* are vector operators.[176]

Table 7 (overleaf) demonstrates the semantic fields generated by these operations for both OBLIGATION and DUTY. It needs to be emphasised that these analyses concern the totality of gendered references and their relationships with key words within the whole corpus; they operate only at the word level and can tell us nothing about the addressor, addressee or author of any specific reference.

The results demonstrate female semantic fields for OBLIGATION that bring to the fore more passive roles associated with socialised activity and with influencing, whilst the masculine fields contain rather more active verbs and greater emphasis on coercion. The female attributes of DUTY stress the qualities expected of a wife or mother and there is a greater presence of moral signifiers such as honour, fidelity and chastity, whilst the male attributes locate *duty* functionally by emphasising compliance. Not all grammatical forms were gendered, and the same process applied to *obliging* and *dutiful* revealed only slight differences in emphasis, the terms effectively being used in similar senses for both men and women although the female versions do place slightly more emphasis on having an accommodating nature. The technical uses of the term *duties* ensure that male and female forms generate results with similar meanings. If *gentleman/lady* is substituted for *man/woman* the output simply results in slightly more socially 'elevated' semantic fields, preserving any gender biases.

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[176] An elegant demonstration of this technique is given in Siobhán Grayson and others, 'Exploring the Role of Gender in 19th Century Fiction Through the Lens of Word Embeddings', in *Language, Data, and Knowledge*, ed. by Jorge Gracia and others (Galway, Ireland: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 358–64.

Table 7: Female and male attributes of OBLIGATION and DUTY

Female attributes of *obligation*
'obligations', 'injunction', 'oath', 'duty', 'attachment', 'affirmation', 'obedience', 'affection', 'acknowledgment', 'assurance', 'promise', 'injury', 'duties', 'protection', 'subjection'.
Male attributes of *obligation*
'obligations', 'injury', 'debt', 'inducement', 'contribution', 'impediment', 'objection', 'duty', 'restraint', 'observance', 'authority', 'injunction', 'grievance', 'consideration', 'discouragement'.
Female attributes of *obligations*
'civilities', 'kindnesses', 'obligation', 'favours', 'attentions', 'indignities', 'attractions', 'services', 'commendations', 'duties', 'disadvantages', 'injunctions', 'excellencies', 'misfortunes', 'debts'.
Male attributes of *obligations*
'obligation', 'benefits', 'debts', 'duties', 'commendations', 'advantages', 'services', 'engagements', 'civilities', 'discouragements', 'favours', 'inconveniencies', 'debt', 'credit', 'merit'.
Female attributes of *oblige*
'accompany', 'undeceive', 'console', 'compel', 'perswade', 'deceive', 'persuade', 'reinstate', 'entrust', 'assist', 'recommend', 'displease', 'disoblige', 'supplant', 'remind', 'accost', 'attach', 'encourage', 'accommodate', 'reconcile', 'teaze', 'teize', 'admonish', 'advise', 'intitle', 'acquaint', 'mortify', 'constrain', 'espouse', 'seduce'.
Male attributes of *oblige*
'encourage', 'intitle', 'compel', 'enable', 'satisfie', 'recommend', 'induce', 'reclaim', 'intimidate', 'incite', 'attach', 'supplant', 'embarrass', 'undeceive', 'mortify', 'advise', 'entitle', 'serve', 'discourage', 'satisfy', 'qualify', 'dispossess', 'undo', 'authorize', 'acquit', 'perswade', 'disoblige', 'permit', 'authorise', 'discountenance'.
Female attributes of *obliging*
'engaging', 'complaisant', 'inviting', 'condescending', 'courteous', 'affectionate', 'dutiful', 'affable', 'respectful', 'promising', 'amiable', 'agreeable', 'communicative', 'accommodating', 'polite'.
Male attributes of *obliging*
'complaisant', 'engaging', 'inviting', 'courteous', 'condescending', 'unreserved', 'entertaining', 'communicative', 'respectful', 'punctual', 'affable', 'liberal', 'acceptable', 'attentive', 'accommodating'.
Female attributes of *duty*
'sex', 'obedience', 'modesty', 'mother', 'honour', 'affection', 'marriage', 'allegiance', 'duties', 'fidelity', 'husband', 'sister', 'kindness', 'chastity', 'self', 'vows', 'gratitude', 'friendship', 'tenderness', 'weakness', 'consciences', 'mistress', 'service', 'niece', 'passion', 'business', 'condition', 'attachment', 'virtue', 'nuptials'.
Male attributes of *duty*
'profession', 'obedience', 'obligation', 'service', 'capacity', 'duties', 'debt', 'allegiance', 'function', 'business', 'office', 'welfare', 'labour', 'observance', 'attention', 'vocation', 'task', 'diligence', 'gratitude', 'decision', 'salvation', 'honour', 'belief', 'humanity', 'interest', 'maker', 'obligations', 'surety', 'mite', 'holiness'.
Female attributes of *duties*
'offices', 'debts', 'taxes', 'conditions', 'prohibitions', 'burthens', 'expences', 'attentions', 'obligations', 'commodities', 'ceremonies', 'injunctions', 'civilities', 'privileges', 'duty'.
Male attributes of *duties*
'debts', 'employments', 'functions', 'restraints', 'obligations', 'benefits', 'satisfactions', 'duty', 'engagements', 'contributions', 'offices', 'obligation', 'taxes', 'expences', 'burthens'.
Female attributes of *dutiful*
'affectionate', 'condescending', 'compassionate', 'amiable', 'vertuous', 'chast', 'tender-hearted', 'chaste', 'courteous', 'submissive', 'noble-minded', 'undutiful', 'amiably', 'obliging', 'complaisant'.
Male attributes of *duties*
'faithful', 'loyal', 'affectionate', 'disinterested', 'merciful', 'sincere', 'magnanimous', 'zealous', 'punctual', 'obedient', 'devout', 'considerate', 'submissive', 'compassionate', 'confidential'.

Whilst such variances suggest that different meanings were attached to OBLIGATION and DUTY depending on gendered contexts, we should be wary of such conclusions without a great deal more evidence. These differences might, for example, reflect a public sphere populated by men concerned with weighty matters and a domestic sphere as the province of women interested in relationships.[177] However, there could be more prosaic explanations deriving, for example, from the nature of the corpus. It is likely, for example, that references to coercive obligations occurred more frequently in works in which male terms proliferated, such as those dealing with religion, politics or finance, and the picture is further complicated by generic references to *man* in its sense of *mankind*, encompassing both genders. Conversely, works in which female terms were more common often had social or domestic themes, for example, popular novels dealing with moral dilemmas often featured female characters in leading roles. If genres did tend towards preferred gender roles this could bias the vector field so that any firm conclusion should be reached only after a more nuanced investigation; indeed, gendered renderings of various 'virtuous' terms would more generally be a fruitful area for further research.

Relationships

Interactions between OBLIGATION and many other concepts could be explored using vector arithmetic, but we will focus here on just a few key ideas, taking some of the most significant value terms listed in Table 1 (p. 39). If we consider their differences (*ie* subtracting the term from OBLIGATION or *vice versa*) semantic fields show shifts that stress different aspects of obligation. For example, taking *trade* away from *obligation* removes emphasis on its contractual elements whilst the converse action (stripping *obligation* from *trade*) removes its social connotations. Taking *obligation* away from *friends* delivers references to acquaintances towards whom one has little commitment (*companions, neighbours, courtiers, wits* and *youths*). This resonates with the earlier finding that FRIEND co-occurred frequently with OBLIGATION in the corpus, implying the bonds of loyalty that friendship implies.[178] Similarly, removing the plural form *obligations* from *families* results in social groups towards whom one had weaker allegiance: *neighbourhood, college, club, town, party, coffee-house*. *Religion* without *obligation* produces a different kind of result, that of

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[177] The gendered nature of private and public spheres in the eighteenth century has been disputed. See Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), 383–414; Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29.1 (1995), 97–109; Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (Harlow: Longman, 1998), pp. 305–18.

[178] For a discussion of loyalty, see David Owens, 'The Value of Duty', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 86.1 (2012), 199–215.

heresy or 'unchristian' thought: *popish, romish, mahometan, politics, popery*, perhaps implying that those faiths lacked the protestant ideals of unmediated mutual obligations between man and God. If *obligation* is stripped away from *nation* a semantic field is similarly produced that is populated by words that imply loss of a sense of community - *rabble, commonwealth, mob, highlanders, rustics*.

These references have dealt with pluralities: families, friends, and religion, that is, with generalised notions. There are very different outcomes if the focus shifts to singular forms (*family, friend, etc*). If *family*, *friend* or *god* are detached from the verb *oblige* new freedoms of action were implied: without the ties to family, friend or God came the opportunity to act in ways unmediated by affect (*undeceive, compel, constrain, astonish*, *dispossess*, *reprove, embarrass*). Effectively, removing those ties reduced the mitigating responsibilities that obligation brought.

It would be tempting to over-interpret these results as providing commentaries on the nature of such relationships but that would require a much more detailed investigation. The purpose here is simply to demonstrate that, to the eighteenth-century mind, such relationships essentially entailed obligation - if detaching ***<obligation>*** from ***<family>*** radically alters its semantic field, then eighteenth-century uses of the word *family* must have usually implied a sense of obligation. Similarly, references to *trade* implied an acknowledgement of its social impacts, whilst *friends* implied a sense of loyalty, and *nation* a sense of order and responsibility.

Summary and conclusions

This chapter has treated OBLIGATION and DUTY separately, exploring how each was defined and used. It has demonstrated that in most instances when DUTY was used it could be replaced by one or another form of OBLIGATION with no loss of meaning, but the reverse was very frequently not the case: OBLIGATION had many senses and uses for which DUTY could not be substituted. There were also other important if subtle distinctions between these two terms. Generally, DUTY carried an exogenous sense, an expectation or requirement imposed externally either by some agent or in conformity to some code of conduct. It was also reflexive, describing the standards that you required of yourself or that others required of you. OBLIGATION could sometimes be used in those senses but much more usually it appealed to other motivations, usually with a strong affective element. Its uses seem to have been essentially endogenous, generated from within as a pledge derived from one's personal code - a sense of what was the right, proper or decent thing to do. And, importantly, it was essentially transactional, describing what one owed to other people. Whilst *duty* could be felt in isolation, *obligation* was usually directed towards some person or cause.

Taking all the word forms of OBLIGATION and DUTY together, this discussion demonstrates that the language of obligation contained some instrumental meanings many of which were captured in the dictionaries of the time. However, its major contributions to eighteenth-century language extended far beyond such mundane senses, ranging over ethical and emotional dimensions that represented moral necessity, belief, social conventions and allegiance. It represented not merely the contractual bonds described in the lexicons but also those imaginative bonds that bound people intimately together.

Over the last two chapters, we have established that eighteenth-century discussion of moral and social relationships underwent linguistic change, growing rapidly over the first half of the century, its new uses including both ethical and social dimensions, and then its employment began to wane. These quantitative findings provide a level of confidence that this is a definitive aspect of eighteenth-century discourse that would not have been revealed simply by mining select texts. It allows us now to turn to the more established methods of intellectual, cultural and social history to explore obligation, but with an assurance that we are indeed investigating a specific phenomenon of eighteenth-century life and a certainty about the meanings that these terms could take.

The next chapter will begin that exploration with a discussion of the ethical and affective nature of obligation, a key focus of philosophical debate in the first half of the eighteenth century. It also marks a transition from a focus on words to content. Up to now, we have relied on the frequency with which the specific word forms of OBLIGATION and DUTY occurred in large collections of texts, merely using specific examples to illustrate these general findings. Now that our focus turns to select texts by specific authors, such frequency tests are no longer reliable guides for a variety of reasons. Firstly, individual writing styles, the nature of the topic or the intended audience can all affect the vocabulary range of a work. Secondly, language use and fashion varied over time and care needs to be taken in comparing specific word use from different parts of the period. For example, long, flowery dedications were more likely to preface early-century works than those written later. Finally, if an author wished to deal directly with obligation, he was likely to approach the topic analytically, looking at its constituent concepts and may not necessarily have needed to use its head words overmuch. At the outset of his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* David Humes states unequivocally that "The end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty" and devotes the final section of his Conclusions to addressing the question "whether every man, who has any regard to his own happiness and welfare, will not best find his account in the practice of every moral duty". Yet, despite this explicit focus on duty, he uses the various grammatical forms of either obligation or duty only 55 times compared with *moral* 294 times,

sentiment(s) 210 times, *just/justice* 186 times and *virtue* 183 times.[179] The next chapter therefore moves the focus from specific word usage (occurrences of OBLIGATION and DUTY) to discussion of the significance of the concept more generally, in particular how it was understood and explored by various thinkers.

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[179] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. by Jerome B. Schneewind (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 14, 79.

CHAPTER 3: OBLIGATION AS AN INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE

Introduction

The previous two chapters brought into focus the growing incidence of the language of obligation and demonstrated that its new uses afforded an evolving vocabulary for discussion of ethical, social and emotional questions. These new senses of obligation ranged across three types of debate: *what are my moral obligations, how do I manage my feelings of obligation, and how should I oblige those people I like or feel some responsibility towards?* In this and later chapters we will explore the nature of those debates, partly to understand what interested the eighteenth-century mind but also to ask the rather more challenging question, *why were these changes in outlook taking place?* In Chapter 5 the focus will be on wider public discussions about the pressures to oblige in plays, literature, advice manuals and other forms of writing for public consumption whilst Chapter 6 will consider obliging practices, but here we will concentrate on the more rarefied world of intellectual debate which from John Locke to Adam Smith was dominated by ideas of moral obligation, its limits, origins and impacts.

It could be argued that intellectuals operate in a world apart from ordinary people and that a focus on their writing might, in a work which is primarily a cultural and social history of obligation, be a distraction. There are, however, three defences for the inclusion of this chapter. Firstly, philosophers held a more important place in the wider cultural life of the eighteenth century than in Britain today and their works were often celebrated. For example, the young law student Dudley Ryder discussed Locke and Berkeley with his friends in the coffeehouse.[180] Locke's works were widely owned although many people might have shared the view of the East Sussex shopkeeper Thomas Turner who, owning a copy of Locke's *Essay Concerning Understanding*, found it "a very abstruse book". He seems to have got on rather better with Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education*, reading it on three consecutive days.[181] This second work was sufficiently well-known that Samuel Richardson weaved it into the plot of *Pamela*, with 67 mentions in the heroine's fictional correspondence.[182] Richardson was not alone; Locke was so often called in aid by writers in discussing their pet ideas that novelists could safely employ him as a plot device, as when Henry Fielding in *Tom Jones* had Mrs Fitzpatrick remark in explaining her loss of love for her husband, "one

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[180] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 45, 47, 114.
[181] Thomas Turner, *Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765*, ed. by David Vaisey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 74; Tadmor, ''In the Even''', p. 167n.
[182] Richardson, *Pamela*, pp. 479, 540–78 and passim.

is apt, in these abstracted considerations, to lose the concatenation of ideas, as Mr Locke says".[183] Laurence Sterne used Locke to counterpose an elevated idea with more earthy considerations, arguing that "wit and judgment in this world never go together; inasmuch as they are two operations differing from each other as wide as east is from west.—So, says Locke,—so are farting and hickuping, say I".[184] More generally, Locke (along with Newton) became a cypher for great wisdom, as in Mark Akenside's ode to the Bishop of Winchester, "To William's ear with welcome joy/ Did Locke among the blest unfold".[185] In all, Locke was mentioned in around 8-10% of eighteenth-century published works.[186]

A second argument for including philosophical debate is that it provides clues concerning the wider context - as Thomas Kasulis has remarked, "A philosophical position is an answer to a specific question, and no question is without context".[187] Dror Wahrman, struggling with a similar dilemma concerning the interaction between philosophy and culture, has taken this argument further and claims that philosophical debate is a manifestation of cultural change - not necessarily its driving force or central to the change, but nevertheless very frequently part of it, whilst Julian Baggini notes that "Ideas that are developed and analysed in depth by scholars do have their counterparts in the general culture, but in simpler, vaguer, broader forms … There is nonetheless a relationship between high scholarship and everyday living".[188] It is also helpful to remember that 'philosophy' was interpreted rather more widely in the eighteenth century to encompass intellectual writing beyond the small class of thinkers we now call philosophers, thus constituting an overlap between intellectual and cultural histories.[189]

The final argument for a focus on intellectual concerns is that it provides a more closed and limited setting within which cultural change can be studied, thus enabling an explanatory hypothesis to be developed which can then be tested in the more fluid and complex environment

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[183] Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, ed. by R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 534.

[184] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Melvin New and Joan New (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 174.

[185] Mark Akenside, *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside: Containing His Pleasures of Imagination, Odes, Miscellanies, Hymns, Inscriptions, &c.* (London: Printed and embellished under the direction of C. Cooke, 1795), p. 209.

[186] More precisely, Locke was mentioned in 8.23% of extant eighteenth-century works excluding reprints of his own works in the texts in ECCO, 'JISC Historical Texts'. Locke was also mentioned 743 times in 230 works included in ECCO-TCP, a dispersal of 10.5%.

[187] Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), p. 17.

[188] Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*, pp. 189–90; Julian Baggini in his Introduction to *How the World Thinks: A Global History of Philosophy* (London: Granta Books, 2018).

[189] Timothy Stanton, 'Locke and His Influence', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by James A. Harris, 2013, p. 22.

of social discourse at large: to use a scientific metaphor, it provides a laboratory experiment that can then be tested in the field.

A renewed sense of obligation is not, of course, the only change that can be observed in the way that people in the early eighteenth century thought about themselves and their place in society, and we will see how some historians have variously described, for example, a new culture of manners and of sociability, a growing public sphere, a new regard for the self, for autonomy, or for belief in an increasingly distant God, one that was no longer the daily arbiter of moral decision-making.[190] This then raises an important question concerning the engine of such changes; several writers have suggested explanations although these, in the main, provide answers that are local to the particular questions they were examining. However, as we explore philosophical accounts of moral obligation, a descriptive social model will begin to emerge that can help us understand why obligation became such a common trope in the first half of the eighteenth century and which may contribute to explanations of wider change.

Philosophical accounts of the nature of obligation

As is frequently the case in historical discussion, we need to establish our chronological scope. In the *Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy,* James Harris suggests that the philosophers' eighteenth century effectively begins with Locke (whose published works appeared mainly in the 1690s) arguing that much of eighteenth-century philosophy was a reaction to questions raised by Locke.[191] Harris suggests that its endpoint is rather more diffuse. The upheavals of the American and French Revolutions had been preceded during the 1760s and 1770s by new thinking about personal rights and the role of the state in works by thinkers such as John Wilkes, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham although their impacts were often not felt until well into the nineteenth century, thus providing a less clear end-date. Given the trajectory of obligation's ordinary language use and our interest in the reasons for its rise (rather than its decline), it seems apposite to end our discussion with Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* published in 1759.

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[190] For examples see, respectively, Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness'; Terrence Bowers, 'Universalizing Sociability: The Spectator, Civic Enfranchisement, and the Rule(s) of the Public Sphere', in *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*, ed. by Donald J. Newman (Newark: UDP, 2005); Wahrman, *Making the Modern Self*; Jerome B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Knud Haakonssen, 'The Character and Obligation of Natural Law According to Richard Cumberland', in *English Philosophy in the Age of Locke*, ed. by M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[191] 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by James A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1–2.

The philosophical context

Stephen Darwall has argued that morality as a philosophical problem, one in which personal good might conflict with the general good, was effectively an innovation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries arising directly out of the conflicts and uncertainties of the former century. He poses it as a problem of normativity, of changing conceptions of what one ought to do.[192] Jerome Schneewind has interpreted the debate as one concerned with challenges to the idea of morality conceived in terms of obedience to some external authority (God's will, the King's command, the law).[193] The seventeenth century's religious wars, the Restoration and then the Glorious Revolution brought fundamental social, religious and political change, aspects of which will be discussed later in this thesis. Here, however, we will concentrate on its impacts on ethical debate beginning with a brief review of its effects on religion, authority and conceptions of the self, and then consider how these changes affected notions of obligation.

Although the late Victorian scholar L.A. Selby-Bigge (1897) was not the first to note the 'moralising' tendency of late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century philosophers he was the first to unify their writing and term them 'the British Moralists'.[194] His own characterisation of the period was one in which the church was much weakened in the post-Restoration period by the religious disputes of the previous century which, coupled with increasing wealth and materiality, caused spiritual ideals to be "smothered under respectability" resulting in an intellectual reaction in which moral behaviour was reappraised.[195] There have since been many other accounts for the period's increased focus on moral philosophy but the interests of the current generation of intellectual commentators lie mainly with how thinkers dealt with personal motivation, seeking internalising explanations for the changes that took place. They effectively describe a psychological turn within eighteenth-century intellectual debate, one that affected views on religion, authority and the self.[196]

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[192] Stephen Darwall, The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought': 1640-1740 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 2–4.

[193] Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, p. 4.

[194] L. A. Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists, Being Selections from Writers Principally of the Eighteenth Century (1897)*, 2 vols (Indianapolis: Online Library of Liberty, 2013).

[195] Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists*, p. xiv.

[196] By 'turn' I mean a sea-change in perspective or approach, what Bergmann has called a 'fundamental gambit as to method', quoted in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. by Richard Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 8.

Religious challenges

Classical natural law had suggested that ideas of morality emanate from universal moral principles that can be uniquely defined through reasoned argument. Darwall argues that this stance was becoming problematic since it suggested that there is a single correct interpretation of God's will, a viewpoint at the heart of many of the religious wars of the period and, by the late seventeenth century, there was an urgent political need to heal religious and political wounds which required more flexible interpretations of morality that encompassed greater diversity of opinion.[197] Similarly, Schneewind interprets the religious strife of the seventeenth century as arising from competition between different visions of God's moral code. Religious and political groups were offering alternative theories concerning the proper conduct of religious, public and private life but, taken together, they were all testing contemporary assumptions about the nature of authority and the sources of power. Like Darwall, Schneewind argues that this challenge to religious authority demanded re-evaluation of the sources and nature of moral obligation, but this did not necessarily represent rejection of God's power, only of His wish to intervene directly in men's moral consciences.[198] Other commentators argue that the British experience was part of a general European movement in which, over the course of the long eighteenth century, national churches retreated from their dominant roles in defending theological positions to one in which they supported the political establishments of their respective countries, at the same time seeking accommodation across the Christian confession.[199]

Keith Thomas has discussed religious change in several books and suggests that practised religious belief in seventeenth-century England was rather more heterogeneous than these accounts suggest.[200] He has also written of attempts by individuals to ensure that the moral decisions that they made in everyday life conformed to God's wish by appealing to their consciences.[201] It is worth looking in detail at his discussion since we will see later how the sense of conscience was, to a large extent, superseded by the sense of obligation.

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[197] Darwall, *Internal Ought*, pp. 5–8.

[198] Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 7–9.

[199] See, for example, B.A. Gerrish, 'Natural and Revealed Religion', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 641–65.

[200] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 166–73.

[201] Keith Thomas, 'Cases of Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G.E. Aylmer*, ed. by John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Conscience and sincere intent

As an early modern historian, Thomas has focused on the religious challenges of the seventeenth century and the decline in 'appeals to conscience' towards the end of the century.[202] He describes the period as one in which it became increasingly difficult to square private faith with changing religious and political demands, and religious people frequently faced increasing difficulty in determining the proper way to act, for example, whether to conform to new laws concerning worship or take fresh oaths of allegiance to the monarch. Such quandaries spurred an increase in the practice of seeking guidance from professional moral experts (casuists - usually priests, lawyers, or learned men) who provided guidance on questions of conscience. Such 'cases of conscience' arose in those areas of life where there is no explicit biblical command or where the command might be open to interpretation. In such cases, a person was expected to follow his or her conscience whilst conforming to the general requirements of God's law, not only in matters of religious and political conformity but in areas of private conduct such as marital questions and business ethics, so that some skill was therefore required in divining the right course of action.

The early century therefore saw significant growth in the practice of seeking professional moral advice in the forms of personal guidance, sermons or advice literature. Thomas traces the growth and nature of this activity and argues that, in the latter part of the century, the influence of such advisers was on the wane due to a shift from a belief that moral behaviour required strict adherence to complex rules towards a sense that what was required was the 'sincere intent' to act in the pursuit of goodness. Thus, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the art of casuistry had virtually disappeared and it was in this atmosphere that the moral philosophers came into their own, looking to man's nature and capacity for reason rather than to God's law to determine the source of obligation.[203] This viewpoint has also been emphasised by Edward Andrew, who plots the move from conscience as an innate product of natural law towards a normative product of sociability and the desire for mankind's approval.[204]

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[202] Thomas, 'Cases of Conscience', p. 29.
[203] Thomas, 'Cases of Conscience', pp. 52–54.
[204] Edward Andrew, *Conscience and Its Critics: Protestant Conscience, Enlightenment Reason, and Modern Subjectivity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 5.

Thomas based his analysis on a wide reading of seventeenth-century texts. However, as we noted in the Introduction, Thomas regularly expressed his concern that his various assessments might be the result of impressionistic reading. Fortunately, we now have available the techniques described in Chapter 1 to test out Thomas's hypothesis concerning the rise and fall of such cases. We can plot the rate at which *conscience* was mentioned in early modern writing as a proportion of total writing, and the results are illustrated in Figure 8. As can be seen, they are strongly supportive of the trajectory he describes.[205]

Figure 8: Incidence of *conscience* in published works 1580-1700 (Moving Average)

Source: EEBO-TCP
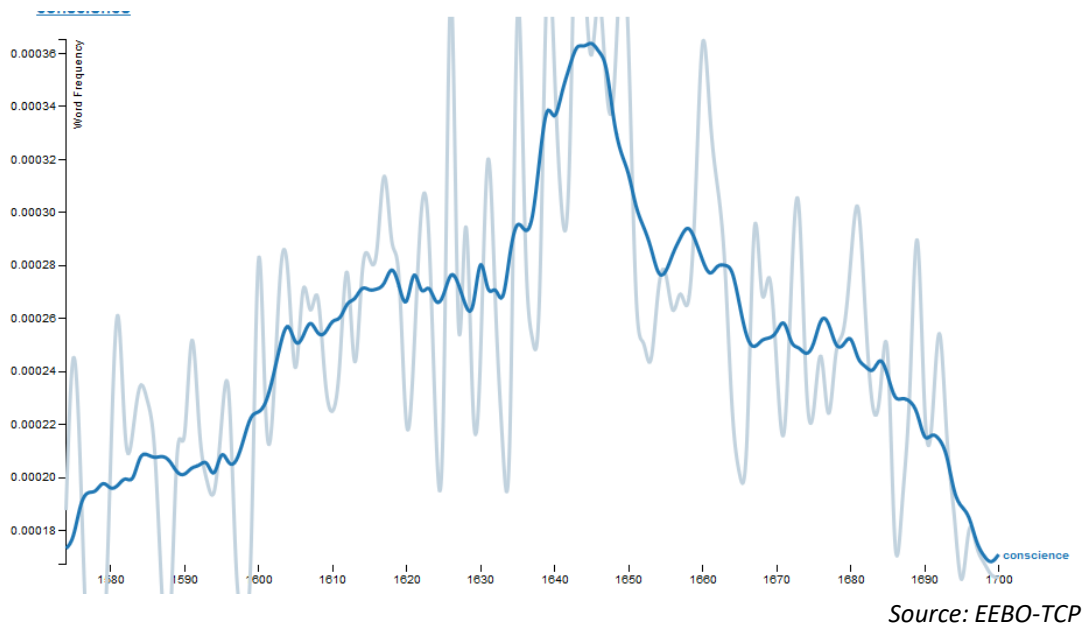
As Thomas has hypothesised, discussion of conscience appears to have been a very seventeenth-century mode of discourse, reaching its peak during the Civil War and virtually disappearing by the end of the century. He depicts the changes wrought over the second half of the seventeenth century as representing both a secularisation of morality and a process of generalisation from 'cases' to moral principles. However, the processes he describes could also be interpreted as an example of a rising confidence in the self - the ability to make judgments about the morally appropriate way to act without reference to outside expertise, and this raises questions about the sources of moral authority.

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[205] Data obtained from EBBO-TCP and analysed using Humanities Digital Workshop, 'Early Modern Print, EEBO N-Gram Browser', *Washington University in St. Louis* <https://earlyprint.wustl.edu/eebotcpngrambrowser.html> [accessed 21 January 2019] with the following settings: 'conscience'/1580-1700/including lemmas/graph smoothing set to 10-year rolling average.

Moral Authority

Schneewind describes the pre-modern conception of morality as obedience to God whether directly as represented in biblical writing or as interpreted by church authorities. This viewpoint became increasingly inadequate in resolving the different sectarian solutions to the social and political challenges of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the challenge facing philosophers was therefore to understand the sources of the moral urge. They increasingly interpreted this as deriving from individual responsibility, what Schneewind renders as self-governance defined as the capacity within all of us to determine what constitutes morality, what others might term agency.[206] He interprets eighteenth-century moral philosophy as taking a series of interpretative steps towards human control.

Darwall sees the task set by eighteenth-century philosophers as the exploration of morality in terms of the "requirements or demands that are binding on all rational persons, even though the conduct demanded may lack any necessary connection to the good of the person obligated" or, to express it more simply, what we *ought to do* in any given situation.[207] He sees eighteenth-century morality as the emergence of a philosophy that put the individual at the centre and thus posed the question *What motivates us to act morally?* This shifted the argument away from the nature of the good towards understanding the nature of obligation, what Darwall terms 'the internal ought'.[208]

Both these interpretations seek to explain why the thinkers of the period exerted considerable effort to determine why we feel obliged to act in certain ways, focussing their attention on the source of our sense of obligation.

The sources of obligation

In reversing centuries of debate that had attributed religious, political and personal duty to external authority, British thinkers in the eighteenth century established and explored novel philosophical questions many of which remain the subject of debate today.[209] It is impossible to summarise the range and subtlety of either their ethical arguments or the extensive explanations provided by modern scholars, and what follows is a necessarily imperfect summary of their views

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[206] Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 4–10.
[207] Darwall, *Internal Ought*, p. 2.
[208] Darwall, *Internal Ought*, pp. 5–8.
[209] See, as merely one example, John T. Scott, 'The Sovereignless State and Locke's Language of Obligation', *The American Political Science Review*, 94.3 (2000), 547.

concerning the sources of obligation. This section will review what these thinkers considered to be the origins of the sense of obligation, leaving until later what they had to say about social morality.

Much eighteenth-century moral writing reacted against the sceptical views of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) that man conceives of good and evil as being directly aligned with his self-interested desires and aversions, conditioned only by the impacts arising from living within society: the fear of retribution from those affected by your decisions and the advantages that accrue by cooperating with others. Hobbes considered that obligation arises only from our own actions and promises.[210] John Locke (1632-1704) rejected this Hobbesian outlook and considered that man, beginning life as a *tabula rasa*, learns experientially that the fulfilment of moral obligations leads to well-being, thus providing an empirical internal motivation. Indeed, Locke defined ethical behaviour as "those Rules, and Measures of humane Actions, which lead to Happiness".[211] He considered that the good causes pleasure within us and its absence causes pain, and our will is created from our desire to attain pleasure and avoid unease. Good and evil are defined not only by our experiences but also by universal moral laws that create order in the world. These act in such a way that they create pleasure from compliance and guilt from non-compliance, subjecting the will to an ethical modifying force, an "obligation to mutual Love amongst Men" which defines the duties that we owe one another.[212]

Locke's one-time pupil, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) was a pivotal figure for eighteenth-century ethics.[213] He was critical of Locke's view that we are guided to act morally by the pleasure we derive from obeying universal moral laws as giving insufficient weight to our virtuous instinct both because it continued to rely on externally imposed rules and also drew on a base motive, the rewards of happiness, as its driving force.[214] Shaftesbury viewed virtue as being inherent, founded in the human mind and deriving from a natural 'moral sense' which guides actions and gives autonomy to those actions.[215] Darwall has stressed the novelty of Shaftesbury's

[210] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 39, 150; Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 84–86; Mark Peacock, 'Obligation and Advantage in Hobbes' Leviathan: Canadian Journal of Philosophy', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 40.3 (2010), 433–58.

[211] John Locke, An Essay Concerning Understanding, ed. by Peter H Nidditch, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke, Online Edition 2013 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 720.

[212] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. by Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 101–2; Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 145–47, 157.

[213] Wider historical interest in Shaftesbury has grown in recent years and he is now seen as an important figure in defining the sociable instincts of the period. See, for example, Klein, *Shaftesbury and Culture of Politeness*.

[214] 'An inquiry concerning virtue or merit', Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 163–230; Darwall, *Internal Ought*, pp. 177–78; Douglas J. Den Uyl, 'Shaftesbury and the Modern Problem of Virtue', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 15.01 (1998), 275–316 (pp. 289–90).

[215] Darwall, *Internal Ought*, pp. 177–78.

notion that the driving force behind morality is an 'obligation to virtue', an entirely internalised conception of morality.[216] Similarly, Schneewind sees Shaftesbury as the first philosopher to lay claim to individual moral control over our actions in its insistence that man is driven by both generous tendencies and a faculty for moral judgement, a 'moral sense' that discerns what actions should be approved or disapproved, so that obligation is an inherent component of virtuousness.[217]

Frances Hutcheson (1694-1745) acknowledged Shaftesbury's conception of obligation, agreeing that it is an inherent aspect of our nature to approve virtue "to be pleas'd and happy when we reflect upon our having done virtuous Actions, and to be uneasy when we are conscious of having acted otherwise".[218] However, he also posited a more fundamental form of obligation which sets aside personal satisfaction and emphasises our natural obligation to act in ways that are benevolent towards others.[219] Hutcheson proposed two sources for our sense of obligation: an internal sense, the instinct towards benevolence, but also another derived from our experience of the judgements made by others conveyed through admonishment from friends or injured parties. This independent standard of morality, relying on spectators, became influential in the work of his pupil, Adam Smith, which will be discussed shortly.[220]

David Hume (1711-1776) extended the conception of our sense of virtue and developed a complex understanding of moral judgement as arising both from 'natural virtues' that derive from character traits such as benevolence, fairness and honesty, and also from 'artificial' virtues such as a sense of justice.[221] He argued that these latter virtues are delineated through social debate and governed by socially agreed conventions or rules, these conceptions of good and evil becoming internalised and given psychological expression as feelings of pleasure or pain in contemplating whether an action is just or unjust.[222] He argued for a sentimental morality that was independent of reason since it excites passions that cannot themselves be subjected to rational tests of truth or falsehood. Moral actions derive from those character traits that we approve (those that add to human well-being), and this moral sentiment is all the guidance we need in deciding on morally appropriate acts.[223] Men establish general rules based on this sense of justice and injustice and

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[216] Darwall, *Internal Ought*, p. 193.
[217] Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 299–302, 306.
[218] Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, ed. by Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), p. 177.
[219] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, p. 176; For a full discussion, see Michael Walschots, 'Hutcheson's Theory of Obligation', *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 20.2 (2022), 121–42 (pp. 136–34).
[220] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, p. 177.
[221] 'Of justice and injustice', Hume, *Human Nature*, pp. 320–22, 369.
[222] 'Of justice and injustice', Hume, *Human Nature*, pp. 310–11; Darwall, *Internal Ought*, pp. 290–94.
[223] 'Of virtue and vice in general', Hume, *Human Nature*, pp. 302, 303; Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 356, 262, 367.

these determine how they ought to behave in any given situation, effectively determining the limits and extent of their obligations.[224]

Adam Smith (1723-1790) rejected this overly general idea of morality based on feelings of approval of the act rather than its impact on others.[225] He argued that it is, in any case, an unreliable test: individuals are capable of approving of, say, cruelty, but that does not make cruel acts moral.[226] Instead, Smith identified moral approval as the capacity for sympathy, the imaginative ability to vicariously experience another's emotions and, conversely, to perceive what others might think about our own emotional responses. In making moral decisions we thus invoke learning from such experiences, and our moral judgement involves us acting simultaneously as both agent and observer. Even if our own moral sentiments provide insufficient guidance, our overarching sense of duty derives from the established rules of behaviour, and the motive for action "may be no other than a reverence for the established rule of duty, a serious and earnest desire of acting, in every respect, according to the law of gratitude".[227]

Thus, over the course of the first six decades of the eighteenth century, these thinkers established a new human philosophy which emphasises personal responsibility for moral decision-making based on obligation towards both one's own sense of integrity and the wellbeing of others. This new ethic has attracted much modern commentary concerning the mechanisms of obligation, its sources, and its relationship to other intellectual and political strands such as the nature of justice, the state and liberty.[228] Rather less attention has been paid however to what eighteenth-century thinkers had to say about the 'content' of obligation, what humanity should feel obligated about, or about obligation's targets, the 'other' to whom the new moral forces were directed. By shifting the focus towards the 'activities' of obligation we can reveal a parallel sociable turn that was taking place alongside the internalising psychological turn.

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[224] Hume, *Human Nature*, pp. 341–42; Stephen Darwall, 'Motive and Obligation in Hume's Ethics', *Noûs*, 27.4 (1993).

[225] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 23; Samuel Fleischacker, 'Adam Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2020 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/smith-moral-political/> [accessed 19 June 2024].

[226] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 381; Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, p. 389.

[227] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 188; Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 389–90.

[228] Among the very many examples are Mark Goldie, 'The English System of Liberty', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 40–78; Timothy Stanton, 'Authority and Freedom in the Interpretation of Locke's Political Theory', *Political Theory*, 39.1 (2011), 6–30; Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2010).

The sociable instinct

A few intellectual historians have discussed sociability in the limited contexts of political economy, notably István Hont, and in political theory (for example, Paul Sagar) but there has been little general discussion of the treatment of sociability in the works of the British Moralists.[229] In contrast, cultural and social historians have emphasised the highly socialised nature of early eighteenth-century society, setting it apart from previous and later periods. Some writers have explored new relational modes within society, describing such ideas as politeness, sociability, civility, sensibility and sentiment.[230] Others have sought out the underlying political, intellectual and cultural movements behind such concepts, for example in Lawrence Klein's work on politeness.[231] Perhaps the most developed narrative for the appearance of a new social imperative is Jürgen Habermas' much-debated account of the emergence of an active public sphere at the turn of the eighteenth century, arguing that private people came together to constitute a 'public' who, through a myriad of individual interactions, determined what was acceptable in both the political and social realms. He sees this public sphere as emerging from three types of change in the late seventeenth century: a new economic settlement caused by the growth of mercantilism, commerce and banking; a new political settlement through which constitutional power transferred from Court to Parliament; and a new print culture emerging from the explosion in publishing following the lapse in press censorship.[232] All of this allowed the development of new sites of conversation located in the coffeehouse, assembly room or theatre and, metaphorically, in an expanding print and graphic

[229] István Hont, 'Unsocial Sociability: 18th Century Perspectives', Intellectual History Archive (presented at the Political Thought Conference, New College, Oxford, 1996); István Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, ed. by Bela Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015); Paul Sagar, *The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the Theory of the State from Hobbes to Smith* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[230] The literature for each is extensive. Examples include: Rosalind Carr, 'A Polite and Enlightened London?', *The Historical Journal*, 59.02 (2016), 623–34; Lawrence E. Klein, 'The Figure of France: The Politics of Sociability in England, 1660-1715', *Yale French Studies*, 92, 1997, 30–45; Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*; Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mark Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[231] Among Lawrence Klein's many works are his *The Rise of 'Politeness' in England, 1660-1715* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1983); *Shaftesbury and Culture of Politeness*; 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 869–98; 'Politeness for Plebes: Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. by Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (Abingdon: Psychology Press, 1997).

[232] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 57–65; Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)', trans. by Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, *New German Critique*, 3 (1974), 49–55.

art culture. The Habermasian public sphere has provided a rich heuristic with which to discuss social and cultural change in the early part of the eighteenth century.[233]

Such treatments of public sociability chime with the major finding of Chapter 2 that the very substantial growth in the use of the language of obligation derives from its obliging rather than its obligatory nature, by its social rather than its compulsory renderings. We therefore need to look afresh at the work of eighteenth-century thinkers in the light of this sociable turn, considering what they had to say about the purposes of moral behaviour.

Philosophical accounts of obligation towards others

Hobbes had constructed a limited conception of obligation: in choosing to live in society, we forgo certain liberties and oblige ourselves to conform to civil law.[234] However, much of the eighteenth century's ethical debate was a reaction to Hobbes' view of individuals as competitive beings, and philosophical discussion of his ideas was often couched in strongly oppositional tones.[235] Those later thinkers focused on the moral necessity to oblige others.

John Locke (1632-1704)

Locke was not primarily a moral philosopher and his major published works concerned either the powers of the state in relation to the individual (*Essay on Toleration*, *Two Treatises of Government*) or the acquisition of knowledge (*Essay on Human Understanding*). However, moral questions were fundamental to these works, if not necessarily well-developed within them.[236] As discussed above, Locke considered that we come to understand the set of moral laws governing human conduct through our reason which reveals both our human nature and the universal set of moral laws that emanate from divine authority.[237]

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[233] Habermas' book has stimulated a great deal of debate. For an extensive overview, see *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (London: MIT Press, 1992). For a revisionist account, see Brian Cowan, 'Public Spaces, Knowledge, and Sociability', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. by Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[234] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 92–93. For discussion of Hobbes' attitude to obligation, see Howard. Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, His Theory of Obligation.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 8–10; and Peacock, 'Obligation and Advantage in Hobbes' Leviathan'.

[235] For examples see Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 54–56 and passim; Hume, *Principles of Morals*, pp. 89–90 and passim; Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 17.

[236] Patricia Sheridan, 'Locke's Moral Philosophy', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2024) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/locke-moral/> [accessed 3 July 2024]; J. B. Schneewind, 'Locke's Moral Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. by Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 199–225.

[237] 'Essays on the Law of Nature I' in John Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. by Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 81–88.

In exploring virtue, Locke was concerned with the origins and nature of obligation and did not have a fully developed view concerning its content or impact (other than in eliciting praise).[238] He defined obligation as "the bond of law whereby one is bound to render what is due" although he drew the law very broadly to encompass the civil code, natural law and superiors that have right and power over us, both divine and secular.[239] He considered that natural inclinations are not entirely self-directed, writing that personal interests are insufficient to define virtue; indeed, he argued the converse, that the interests of all individuals are maximised by fulfilling promises, safeguarding society and protecting equity and justice.[240] Locke described in only the most general terms what men should do to act virtuously, arguing in several places that moral behaviour is evident from the positive impact it has on the actor (rather than the acted upon), most clearly expressed in his minor essay on morality composed in 1667 or 1668:

> Morality is the rule of man's actions for the attaining happiness. For the end and aim of all men being happiness alone, nothing could be a rule or a law to them whose observation did not lead to happiness and whose breach did [not] draw misery after it.[241]

In his philosophical works, Locke's conception of society was thus drawn as a political entity in which people had responsibilities to act in certain ways for the good of the commonwealth.[242] He dealt with the content or impact of obligation in only the most perfunctory of terms, although he did set out the terms of the debate for future thinkers to respond to.

Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713)

It was Shaftesbury who first stressed virtue in terms of the needs of others, redirecting the debate. His writings attempted to define an ethical and aesthetic sociability, a "moral beauty" in behaving well.[243] In his *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit* (1699), he argued that there is an obligation to virtue so that a person can only be considered good or virtuous if his "inclination and affections, his dispositions of mind and temper" are directed not only towards himself but also to the benefit of society and the public.[244] He expanded this view in his *Sensus Communis* ('The Sense of the Common', 1709) in which he argued that man has a moral insight which equates with the common interest, which he termed the 'common sense' of mankind, defined as:

> The sense of public weal and of the common interest, love of the community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness, or that sort of civility which rises from a just sense of the

[238] Angélique Thébert, 'Locke's Ethics of Virtuous Thinking', *Locke Studies*, 22 (2022), 1–22.
[239] 'Essays on the Law of Nature IV' in Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 116–20.
[240] 'Law of Nature IV' in Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 132–33.
[241] 'Morality' in Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 267–68.
[242] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, p. 137.
[243] 'Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author', Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 126.
[244] 'Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit', Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 192.

common rights of mankind, and the natural equality there is among those of the same species … There is no real love of virtue without the knowledge of public good.[245]

Shaftesbury thus shifted the motivational focus away from the personal rewards that good behaviour could bring towards a new emphasis on the best interests of society, these sentiments having parallels with the aesthetic found in the journals and essays published in the first decades of the century (see Chapter 5). Shaftesbury's conception of sociability was that of a learnt experience achieved by good education and upbringing - the well-educated gentleman came to understand that virtue is sociable.[246] Later scholars, beginning with Francis Hutcheson, saw sociability as a rather more fundamental aspect of humanity than simply the outcome of acquired knowledge.

Frances Hutcheson (1694-1745)

In several works, Frances Hutcheson moved the debate even further from Locke's vision of obligation as deriving from the experience of pleasure or pain. Hutcheson contended that man was essentially sociable and that the pleasurable aspects of virtue derived in large part from seeing good done, from the sense of approbation one feels as an observer in the presence of a morally good action. He argued that "Benevolence [is the] sole ground of Approbation", this approbation deriving from the perception that some public good is intended by the actor.[247] He recognised that conceptions of the public good may vary from place to place, and so argued against innate principles of morality, although the moral code of each society is driven by a sense of public benefit: the code might vary in detail in different societies but there is a general and universal moral sense which is ultimately God-given.[248]

Hutcheson was interested in re-examining the notion of obligation in the light of this universal moral sense. He considered that, whether we act disinterestedly or in pursuit of self-interest, there is a natural "Obligation upon all Men to Benevolence", such that we feel "displeas'd with our selves, and uneasy" if we acted in a contrary fashion.[249] Since man is fallible, there may be times when our moral sense becomes so weakened or our selfish passions so strong that they overcome any propensity to benevolence. In such cases, social laws and sanctions are then enforced to control

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[245] 'Sensus Communis', Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 48, 50.
[246] Women rarely featured in Shaftesbury's writing, and then usually in relation to weak or ineffectual behaviour. See, for example, Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 155, 156, 206, 350.
[247] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, pp. 136, 138.
[248] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty* 137–39; *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense (1728)*, ed. Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 187–204.
[249] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, pp. 176–77.

the worst of such tendencies, so that there is a further obligation to obey those laws.[250] His position can be concisely summed up in his coined expression that our moral sense of virtue requires us to take the course of action "which procures the greatest Happiness for the greatest Numbers".[251]

There is another aspect of Hutcheson's project which challenged Shaftesbury's learnt sociability, seeing it instead as an innate 'natural sociability'. He initially set out his ideas in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University (1730) which he entitled *On the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, a work that has received little critical attention.[252] In this lecture, Hutcheson challenged the reductionist philosophies of Hobbes, Pufendorf and Mandeville that men gather in society in search of self-interest, protection, utility or pleasure, arguing that man is naturally sociable.[253] He developed the philosophical justification for sociability that men were driven into society not "merely by external advantage and dread of external evils" but because "there are many desires directly implanted by nature which do not seek either pleasure or physical advantage but things more sublime which themselves depend upon the company of others".[254] These rewards of human society include the giving or receiving of praise and honour and the joy of talking to others and sharing experiences: "there is scarcely anything … agreeable, joyful, happy, cheerful, or delightful, which does not boil up and bubble over from the human heart, and long to be poured out among others".[255] These senses are innate to the structure of the human mind - it is not merely the pleasure gained from human society that motivates us but a natural kinship in human nature, a fellow-feeling that, for example, excites commiseration with those in pain. Although he recognised the deeper kinship that exists within families and between friends, he concluded that "social life … is natural to man for its own sake".[256]

This theme of social morality formed the core of the work of Hutcheson's younger contemporary, David Hume.

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[250] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, pp. 177–78; Michael Walschots' recent paper reaches broadly similar (if much more developed) conclusions about Hutcheson's approach to obligation in 'Hutcheson's Theory of Obligation', *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 20.2 (2022), 121–42.

[251] Hutcheson, *Inquiry into Beauty*, p. 125. Hutcheson appears to have been the first to explore the idea of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, although Leibniz had earlier made use of the phrase in a passing reference. See Joachim Hruschka, 'The Greatest Happiness Principle and Other Early German Anticipations of Utilitarian Theory', *Utilitas*, 3.02 (1991), 165–77 (p. 168).

[252] Francis Hutcheson, 'On the Natural Sociability of Mankind', in *Logic, Metaphysics and the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, ed. by James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), pp. 190–216 A JSTOR search returns just 125 mentions of his lecture, mainly *en passant*.

[253] Hutcheson, 'Natural Sociability', pp. 202–3; See also Gordon Graham, 'Francis Hutcheson and Adam Ferguson on Sociability', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 31.4 (2014), 317–29 (p. 318).

[254] Hutcheson, 'Natural Sociability', p. 203.

[255] Hutcheson, 'Natural Sociability', p. 204.

[256] Hutcheson, 'Natural Sociability', p. 215.

David Hume (1711-1776)

Central to Hume's approach was his emphasis on sentiment. In rejecting Hutcheson's ultimate appeal to a deity, Hume needed to be able to explain the origins of sociable morality within human behaviour. He did this by denying all claims to rational foundations, arguing that our moral sense emerges from our experiences within society which are filtered by the realm of feeling rather than that of reason.[257] He first set out his moral philosophy in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) but its very poor reception caused him to rethink his linguistic style.[258] He therefore recast his ideas in a series of works aimed at a more general audience including *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding* (1748), sets of essays (1741-1757) and, in particular, his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751).[259]

Hume's moral philosophy can be seen as a development of Hutcheson's arguments but it differed in important respects. Like Hutcheson, he believed in the ultimate goodness of mankind and he had little truck with the idea that man is driven by selfish notions. In *his Essay on the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*, he argued that:

> those philosophers that have insisted so much on the selfishness of man [have been led astray] … they found that every act of virtue or friendship was attended with a secret pleasure; whence they concluded, that friendship and virtue could not be disinterested. But the fallacy of this is obvious. The virtuous sentiment or passion produces the pleasure, and does not arise from it. I feel a pleasure in doing good to my friend, because I love him; but do not love him for the sake of that pleasure.[260]

This 'virtuous sentiment' is the essence of Hume's argument. We cannot discover vice or virtue simply through reasoning or by comparing ideas. A murder viewed in the cold light, does not, in itself, betoken a vice: the viciousness of the act is revealed only by reflecting on one's feelings of revulsion: it is not facts that stimulate moral judgements, only our reactions to them, and it is by reference to such feelings and sentiments that virtue and vice become known: "To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration". Thus, we recognise virtue because it stimulates agreeable perceptions, "Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judg'd of".[261]

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[257] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 294; Schnewind, Introduction, *Principles of Morals*, pp. 8–9.
[258] He wrote 'Never literary attempt was more unfortunate than my Treatise of Human Nature. It fell dead-born from the press, without reaching such distinction, as even to excite a murmur among the zealots' in "My Life". See David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), p. xxxiv.
[259] Schnewind, Introduction, Hume, *Principles of Morals*, p. 2.
[260] Hume, Essay XI: Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature, *Essays*, pp. 85–86.
[261] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 303,302.

However, to define morality in terms of our emotional response simply begged the underlying question for Hume: "Why any action or sentiment [...] gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness", and his primary response lay in the related concept of sympathy.[262] He compared human sympathy to the sympathetic resonance of strings, "the motion of one communicates itself to the rest". Comparing our own emotional experiences with our observation of the emotional reactions of others gives us a sentimental repertoire which allows us to perceive people's pain or pleasure. It is from such causes and effects that "we infer the passion: And consequently these give rise to our sympathy".[263]

Hume also considered situations where sympathy alone cannot guide our moral judgments, for example, when balancing private and public good: "We are naturally partial to ourselves, and to our friends; but are capable of learning the advantage resulting from a more equitable conduct".[264] In such cases our sense of natural justice is important, although it can be insufficient where there is, for example, competition for resources or when difficult moral judgments need to be made. In such cases laws and rules of social conduct are required, the test being that of the general advantage of society: "public utility is the sole origin of justice, and that reflections on the beneficial consequences of this virtue are the sole foundation of its merit".[265]

It is important to note how Hume's moral sense developed beyond that of Hutcheson. Hutcheson considered that man's 'natural obligation to benevolence' was innate and God-given, providing the roots of man's sense of the public good. Hume realised that this could be a poor guide, noting that we tend to show most benevolence to those for whom we have affection, rather than to mankind in general.[266] Whilst benevolence is a prime social virtue, it is our capacity for sympathy that drives our sociable instincts, particularly sympathy with the public interest, and this creates an "obligation to justice" - the sense of moral good and evil that follows from our sense of justice and injustice.[267]

Hume depicts obligation as a sentimental notion describing moral necessity rather than some absolute 'sense of duty' since that would suppose "an antecedent obligation". It is therefore meaningless to explain an action as simply a duty without reference to the underlying sentiment or emotion that results in that sense of duty. A father has a duty to his child precisely because that is

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[262] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 305.
[263] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 368.
[264] Hume, *Principles of Morals*, p. 24.
[265] Hume, *Principles of Morals*, p. 20.
[266] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 310.
[267] Hume, *Human Nature*, pp. 320–21.

his natural inclination. If he had no such inclination, there would be no obligation.[268] We thus have in Hume a well-developed conception of social morality emanating from fellow-feeling and obligation to others. He had a very clear view of the place of man in society, one reliant on the 'social virtues':

> no qualities are more intitled to the general good-will and approbation of mankind than benevolence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit, or whatever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others, and a generous concern for our kind and species.[269]

Adam Smith (1723-1790)

The ethics of sociability reached a new level of sophistication in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith considered that moral action derives from a person's relationship to wider society, exemplified in his choice of subtitle, "An Essay towards an Analysis of the Principles by which Men naturally judge concerning the Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours, and afterwards of themselves". He considered that ethical decisions derived from three types of motivation which he termed 'propriety', 'benevolence' and 'prudence', each of which will be discussed below.[270] Like Hume, Smith argued that the mechanisms for moral judgement belong to the world of feelings rather than reason, and his argument was strongly dependent on two contrasting ideas which, although not entirely new, were significantly reworked under his pen: sympathy and the impartial spectator.

Smith's construction of sympathy is similar to that of Hume's in seeing it as resonance with the feelings of another but he argued that it is founded, not on experience, but on an imaginative projection of oneself into the position of another:

> When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own.[271]

Smith also departed from Hume in removing any sense of approval from sympathy: in this regard he used the term rather as we would talk of empathy, implying understanding of, not agreement with, the emotions being displayed. This sympathetic response is not unconstrained and Smith

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[268] Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 333.

[269] Hume, *Principles of Morals*, p. 18. For a discussion of Hume's attitude to obligation, see Darwall, 'Hume's Ethics'.

[270] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*; See also David Norton and Manfred Kuehn, 'The Foundations of Morality', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 939–86 (p. 941).

[271] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 11–13, 374.

wrote at length about the wisdom of moderated and measured responses which he termed propriety. This required reactions to be proportionate to the cause invoking the sentiment (it would, for example, be improper to show excessive grief for the death of a person one little knew) and also to the situation (for instance, avoiding laughing loudly and heartily when others are merely smiling). Sympathy is thus wide-ranging and takes into account not only the immediate cause but also social acceptability, thereby providing a guide to social norms.[272]

Smith was particularly interested in those moral actions that are not in the immediate self-interest of the actor. He considered that we have a capacity for universal benevolence deriving directly from the effects of sympathy, and this can potentially encompass all humanity: "The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society". Similarly, these local interests can be sacrificed for the good of the nation and, by extension, national interests should be subordinated to the "great society of all sensible and intelligent beings".[273] Fonna Forman-Barzilai has described Smith's approach to empathy and justice as forming concentric rings of sympathy that weaken as we move further from our immediate communities.[274]

Whilst benevolence and generosity towards others are important social virtues, individuals constantly balance the virtuous urge against the strong inclination to self-interest. Smith, like Hume, considered this balancing act as requiring a second more urgent virtue to come into play, the requirements of justice: there is "a stricter obligation to act according to justice, than agreeably to friendship, charity, or generosity," and it takes priority over other concerns.[275] In deciding how to act in accordance with this principle, Smith invoked the impartial (or indifferent) spectator whose disinterested judgement provides an objective measure of the moral appropriateness of any situation. This virtual observer gains no personal advantage from the situation and, since there is no reason to favour any single individual among those involved, can imagine himself in the situation of each in turn, measuring his own reactions against those observed, and so able to determine what would be fair and acceptable.[276] Smith considered that we each invoke the impartial spectator when considering what we ought to do in any given situation and this allows us to judge the propriety of our conduct:

[272] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 20–28, 347–53.
[273] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 276–77.,
[274] Fonna Forman-Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[275] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 93.
[276] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 26–27.

> When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion. The first is the judge; the second the person judged of.[277]

Thus, the impartial spectator equates to conscience and sits within us, acting as "the great judge and arbiter of our conduct". It is this "man within the breast" rather than the "soft power of humanity" that guides our obligations whenever we are about to act in a way that will affect the happiness of others.[278]

Although his emphasis was on the social virtues Smith did not entirely reject self-interest as an important motivating force but he transposed it into the virtue of prudence, which he saw as the seemly pursuit of self-interest and self-command, it being prudent to consider the future consequences of our actions and postpone present pleasure or endure present pain to maximise future personal interest.[279] Prudence thus acts to subdue immediate self-interest in order to pursue the wider interests of both today's society and one's own long-term best interests.[280] This apparent clash between the moral imperative of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and his later emphasis in *Wealth of Nations* on self-interest as the motor of economic progress caused earlier scholars either to ignore the earlier work or to see it as what the German Historical School termed "Das Adam Smith Problem".[281] More recently Smith's work has been re-appraised so that his treatment of the economic actor in the *Wealth of Nations* is now often interpreted as a special case of the virtuous social participant described in *Moral Sentiments*.[282]

Sociability revisited

To summarise, each of these thinkers took as their ethical starting point a developing idea of personal obligation. For Locke it was a duty to comply with natural standards learnt through experience, Shaftsbury stressed obligation as the satisfaction derived from acting virtuously, seeing

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[277] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 131.

[278] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 158–59.

[279] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 220–22, 279 et seq.

[280] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 82, 83; Horst Claus Recktenwald, 'An Adam Smith Renaissance Anno 1976? The Bicentenary Output-A Reappraisal of His Scholarship', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 16.1 (1978), 56–83 (p. 71).

[281] Keith Tribe, '"Das Adam Smith Problem" and the Origins of Modern Smith Scholarship', *History of European Ideas*, 34.4 (2008), 514–25.

[282] See, for example, Recktenwald, 'Adam Smith Renaissance', pp. 66–67; Edward W. Coker, 'Adam Smith's Concept of the Social System', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9.2 (1990), 139–42.

man as a sociable being who gains pleasure from doing good. Hutcheson's moral philosophy was based on an obligation to virtue, to do well by society. Hume's morality was guided by sentiment, the emotional necessity to do well by others and act fairly and equitably, and Smith stressed the obligation to disinterested social justice, acting in compliance with the judgements of an impartial spectator. We saw how these philosophers progressively linked the twin ideas of the individual and society, seen both morally and existentially or, to borrow a term from quantum mechanics, how they became entangled: "To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence".[283] With the exception of Locke (who, in this limited respect, perhaps belongs to the seventeenth rather than the eighteenth century), ethical thinkers increasingly placed man within society, obtaining their moral compass from their effect on others.

These accounts thus demonstrate a growing awareness of society as a social entity. As the century wore on, and as the baton of moral obligation was passed from thinker to thinker, the nature of obligation became defined not as rooted solely in the individual but also in relation to society as a whole. The question became, not *what makes me feel obligated*, but now *what obligation do I have towards others and to society at large?* This gradually led to broader questions about the nature of society, reaching its epitome in Smith's vision of a society in which individuals are bound by obligations to both beneficence and justice, emphasising the moral rather than the political and contractual bonds that bind us to others.[284]

Conclusions

We have seen that changes in philosophical outlook in the first half of the century began as a psychological turn in moral philosophy internalising the moral imperative and exploring the essence of human nature expressed by an obligation to do well by one's family and friends. It then widened its focus to stress the individual's place in society by discussing the good citizen's obligation to act in the interests of the community as a whole, effectively making a sociable turn in philosophy.

The linking feature of these debates was its reliance on the language of obligation whether discussing the origins of its moral authority, its affective power, or to whom it should be directed. These shifts in focus among thinkers now need to be tested against more popular social discourse by examining how personal and social obligation were treated in general writing. In particular, we

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[283] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. ix.
[284] An emphasis also discussed by Brian C.J. Singer in 'Montesquieu, Adam Smith and the Discovery of the Social', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 4.1 (2004), 31–57 (p. 36).

will be watchful for any indications that general conceptions of *society* underwent similar shifts in public understanding. This will be the subject of Chapter 5.

However, before embarking on such an examination, a tangential matter concerning the consumption of published material needs to be addressed. In the current chapter, we have been able to focus on specific texts whose purpose and intended audience are well-understood. Chapter 5 will rely on multiple texts produced for a wide variety of purposes and audiences, arguing that the weight of evidence indicates changing perceptions in the population at large. The validity of that argument relies on an assumption that the plethora of plays, novels, chapbooks, leaflets, journals, newspapers, advice literature and didactic texts reached and were understood by a sufficiently large audience to broadly represent the linguistic grasp of most of eighteenth-century society. The next chapter will therefore provide an interlude which explores the nature of the reading public and the texts they read.

CHAPTER 4: READERS AND READING

Introduction

Whilst the next chapter will explore discussion of obligation in the print media, this chapter addresses the questions *who were the reading public* and *how representative of wider society were they?* If, as was claimed in Chapter 1, the written word in the eighteenth century generally reflected the understandings and discourses of its readers, then the nature of that readership becomes significant, and we therefore need to establish how accessible the language of the written word was to the population at large before we can claim that those readers were a microcosm of the wider public.

Participation in reading requires three things to be in place: the necessary skills, access to print materials, and the inclination to read, and this chapter will explore each of these elements. It does not claim to provide an extensive review of the very detailed scholarship that exists on these topics (particularly on literacy) but brings together scholarship from many related fields to consider levels of literacy, the acquisition and employment of reading skills by working people (skilled and unskilled artisans, retailers and servants), the expansion of print material in the early eighteenth century and the extent of the distribution of those materials. Its overall purpose is to gauge the extent of reading participation, particularly among the working population.

Literacy

To borrow from the world of performance evaluation, we can consider three types of measure to explore literacy: its inputs, outputs and outcomes.[285] The most common approach adopted by historians has been an output measure (estimation of literacy rates) but we will also consider other approaches, two input measures (access to schooling and the availability of print material) and two types of evidence for qualitative outcomes (examples of working people engaged in reading and their access to print culture). Each of these topics deserves (and has received) detailed study in its own right, although not usually expressed as literacy measures. We can do little justice to each element here other than provide an overview but, by bringing the individual topics together and re-orientating their evidence, we can explore the possibility that an over-reliance on literacy rates

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[285] See, for example, George A. Boyne, 'Theme: Local Government: Concepts and Indicators of Local Authority Performance: An Evaluation of the Statutory Frameworks in England and Wales', *Public Money & Management*, 22.2 (2002), 17–24.

alone may underestimate the extent of reading among working people in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Literacy Rates

Individual acts of reading leave few traces so it is impossible to apply any direct quantitative measures to literacy in the eighteenth century. Scholars have tended to resort to an indirect measure of literacy first proposed by R.S. Schofield in the 1970s, the ability to sign one's name, arguing both the practical point that a large body of consistent evidence can be obtained that provides the basis for statistical analysis and the pedagogical justification that writing is a higher-order skill dependent on the ability to read a text. Modern pedagogical practice teaches writing alongside reading but the curriculum in use in schools from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century specified that writing should be taught only after competence in reading had been acquired, and so the ability to write presupposed the ability to read - as just one example, the seventeenth-century diarist John Evelyn began school at aged four but did not learn to write until he was eight.[286] A basic writing task (signing one's name rather than making a mark) has therefore been taken by many commentators as a reliable proxy for reading ability, much of the groundbreaking work taking place in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there is a natural flaw in this approach because very many poorer children attended school for no more than three or four years, long enough to become competent readers but not to acquire more than rudimentary writing skills (an issue we will return to shortly).

Schofield has suggested that using signature evidence produces a 'middle-range' estimate of literacy skill, probably under-estimating the number of individuals possessing basic reading skills and over-estimating the number who were fluent writers, and so probably providing a reasonable guide to reading fluency, but his conclusions are based on nineteenth-century statistical surveys from 1837 onwards and may not be a good indicator for the early eighteenth-century.[287] These statistical surveys were originally analysed by Robert Webb (1950) which he compared with the evidence from parliamentary commissioners investigating levels of education among working

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[286] R.S Schofield, 'The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England', in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. by Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 311–25; Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London, 1650-1750* (London: Methuen, 1994), pp. 21–22, 26–35; Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-century Spiritual Autobiographers', *Social History*, 4.3 (1979), 407–35 (pp. 410–12).

[287] Schofield, 'Measurement of Literacy', pp. 317, 324; Keith Thomas has argued a similar dissenting view for the seventeenth century. See his 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', p. 102. Robert Webb, in his original paper analysing the Victorian surveys, also threw doubt on signature evidence as a reliable basis for literacy estimates, Robert K. Webb, 'Working Class Readers in Early Victorian England', *The English Historical Review*, LXV.CCLVI (1950), 333–51 (p. 336).

people between 1833 and 1848. Based on their evidence, he estimates that between one and a half and two times as many working people were found to be readers as were readers and writers.[288] It is incautious however to extrapolate these ratios into the early eighteenth century. Keith Thomas points to the Swedish experience where, by the 1740s, over 90% of the adult population in many rural parishes could pass a reading test but few could write.[289]

Several estimates of literacy in the early eighteenth century have been made using signature evidence. In a summative analysis, Suarez has estimated that the English 'reading public' (ie, fluent readers) consisted of 32% of men and 18% of women in 1696, rising to 37% and 25% respectively by 1756.[290] Based on extensive work, David Cressy suggests that 50% of men and 30% of women in England were literate in 1700 rising by the 1750s to 62% for men and 38% for women.[291] Literacy rates appear to have varied greatly depending on place of residence. R.A. Houston, drawing on depositions from the Northern Assizes, has estimated that male literacy in 1720-40 for villagers, market-townspeople and city-dwellers respectively were, 64%, 66% and 86%, the equivalent rates for women being 21%, 31% and 41%.[292] Occupation was another key determinant of literacy skill and Houston's figures for northern England make an interesting comparison with estimates by Cressy for East Anglia and London (which he based on unspecified sources), Table 8:[293]

Table 8: Occupational literacy rates % and regional variation

	Northern Circuit (1)	East Anglia (2)	London (2)
Husbandmen	56	13	
Tradesmen	72	66 (Norwich)	92
Yeomen	76	72	
All men	58	50	
All women	26	20	56

Sources: (1) Houston, 1720s-40s, (2) Cressy 1720-30

Houston consistently gives a higher literacy rate for the north of England than does Cressy for East Anglia, particularly for the more unskilled sections of the population. Whilst this may be due to structural features (*eg* pastoral farming required a more skilled workforce), it might also be partly attributable to definitional variations: for example, Houston gives separate figures for labourers

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[288] Webb, 'Working Class Readers in Early Victorian England', pp. 349–50.
[289] Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', pp. 102–3.
[290] Michael F. Suarez, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5: 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–36 (pp. 11–12).
[291] 'Literacy and Society in England and Beyond', in *Literacy and the Social Order*, ed. by David Cressy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 177; David Cressy, 'Literacy in Context: Meaning and Measurement in Early Modern England', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. by John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 314.
[292] R A Houston, 'The Development of Literacy: Northern England y 1640-1750'', *Economic History Review*, 35.2 (1982), 199–216 (p. 210).
[293] Houston, 'The Development of Literacy: Northern England y 1640-1750'', pp. 204–6; Cressy, 'Literacy in Context', p. 316.

(15%) but Cressey subsumes this group under husbandmen. Such discrepancies highlight the variability in estimates from different sources, all of which are, in any case, based on the highly specific and unusual instances where a signature was required.

This approach has several problems: firstly, as Helen Berry points out, it is essentially a binary measure (a person either did or did not sign a particular document), thus failing to recognise both the continuum of skills required for literacy and the varying demands of different situations in which writing (or reading) skills might be required.[294] It has been suggested, for example, that contact with officialdom might discourage a non-fluent writer who might then resort to simply making his or her mark, or, conversely, that the urge to impress an official might encourage someone to utilise a long unpractised skill.[295] It also assumes that penmanship was a necessary concomitant of fluent reading which, as we will see, fails to recognise the linear nature of the curriculum of schools in this period, particularly for girls.[296] It also underestimates the importance of regular practice in maintaining a level of competence; for some, writing was a key occupational skill essential in keeping detailed notes and records or issuing a receipt for goods or payment.[297] For others, however, writing was either irrelevant to their trade or there was little necessity to commit business arrangements to paper, particularly in smaller communities where levels of trust were likely to be high. It is notable, for example, that Thomas Turner, a highly literate shopkeeper in East Hoathly, Sussex, was one of the few villagers to whom others turned for assistance in writing letters, drawing up wills or keeping accounts; he sometimes even assisted other leading citizens, for example in writing parish records and accounts.[298]

It would be unsurprising in such circumstances if, through lack of practice, at least some literate tradespeople lost the rudimentary writing skills they had learnt at school but still maintained an engagement in reading. In any case, the gradations between those who provided a signature and those a mark also need to be treated with caution. Mark Hailwood has recently argued that to divide the early modern world into the fully literate who could sign and the non-literate who put their mark is too sharp a division in a society where there was likely to have been a broad spectrum

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[294] Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England : The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 45.

[295] Respectively, R.S Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750–1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10.4 (1973), 437–54 (p. 441); Cressy, 'Literacy and Society', p. 55.

[296] Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550 - 1750*, Themes in British Social History (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 42–44.

[297] For example, William Stout kept extensive notes throughout his life, detailing his business activities, family and social commitments and financial circumstances. William Stout, *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1665-1752*, ed. by JD Marshall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

[298] Thomas Turner, *Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765*, ed. David Vaisey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), xxii, and *inter alia.*

of both reading and writing skills. He has highlighted, in particular, the many whose 'mark' was not simply a cross but the initial letter(s) of their name, suggesting at least some vestigial knowledge of writing.[299] However, those early studies of signature evidence continue to have some relevance for researchers with, for example, around 50 papers on eighteenth-century England published between 2000-20 quoting David Cressy's work on literacy.[300] Signature studies provide at least a minimum baseline for literacy rates and they remain a valuable relative measure in charting variations across social class, geography, gender and employment. However, they present a limited perspective on readers and reading and we need to look further afield for qualifying evidence. Ian Jackson has called for " a new synthesis that combines the new evidence of reading practice with textual analysis to explain continuity and change across the century".[301] His paper provides a helpful synthesis of approaches which examine the book trade on the one hand and the practices and experiences of readers on the other. In a similar vein, this chapter draws together research on literacy, schooling, the book trade and the reading experience of 'common readers' (Jackson's useful phrase) to suggest a broader landscape of reading practice.

Reading

There are fundamental problems with estimates of reading rates based purely on signature evidence. They generally suggest that during the first half of the eighteenth century around half of men and two-thirds of women could not read and that the literate were mainly gentlefolk, professionals, tradesmen and skilled craftsmen. Furthermore, some claim that the 'reading public' actively engaging with print material was limited to no more than around one-third of men and less than a quarter of women.[302] Yet this picture of limited participation in print culture lies uneasily with the many examples that exist of reading among working people and there is a rich historiography of such practices in the early modern period.[303] As a visual starting point, we can consider William Hogarth's artistic depictions of readers in his 'modern moral subjects'.

[299] Mark Hailwood, 'Rethinking Literacy in Rural England, 1550–1700', *Past & Present*, 260.1 (2023), 38–70.
[300] 'EBSCOhost'.
[301] Ian Jackson, 'Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 47.4 (2004), 1041–54 (p. 1041).
[302] Suarez, 'Introduction, History of the Book', pp. 11–12.
[303] See, for example, Adam Fox, 'Popular Verse and Their Readership in the Early Seventeenth Century', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 125–37.

Reading portrayed

Hogarth grew up in a literary environment (his father was a jobbing writer and teacher who also ran a coffeeshop in the shadow of St Pauls) and he lived as a child among the printshops and booksellers of 'Grub Street'.[304] He was a close observer of Londoners' social and working lives which he depicted in his modern moral prints, so we can therefore assume that, although these were works of satire and therefore prone to exaggeration, his moral stories reflected his knowledge of working lives.[305] Hogarth often depicted people from very humble origins and circumstances engaged in reading. In *The Harlot's Progress* (1732) Moll, a seamstress fresh in London from the countryside, is tricked into becoming mistress to a wealthy merchant following which she descends into common prostitution. Despite her humble trade as a country seamstress, Moll is depicted as being literate - there is a pastoral letter on the bedside table of her quarters in the brothel (Figure 9, Plate III) and, when she is dying in her bedchamber (Plate V), she has been reading a pamphlet *Practical Scheme - Anodyne*, probably describing a cure for 'The Secret Diseese' (syphilis).[306]

Figure 9: Detail from Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress* (1732), Plate III and V

Courtesy: British Museum

Similarly, in *Industry and Idleness* (1747) Hogarth expected a lowly weaver's apprentice to be literate even though weaving was one of the cheapest trades in which to buy an apprenticeship,

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[304] Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: The Modern Moral Subject, 1697-1732 Vol 1* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1991), pp. 11–23.
[305] For example, see Paulson's description of the context for 'The Harlot's Progress' in *ibid*, 237–55.
[306] Frederic George Stephens and Edward Hawkins, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (Volume III Part I) 1734-50* (London: Chiswick Press, 1877), p. 56 n.1; Images: William Hogarth, *The Harlot's Progress Plate III*, 1732, British Museum Collection Database; *The Harlot's Progress Plate V*, 1732, British Museum Collection Database.

and he depicted the apprentice engaged in reading in Plates I, II and IV.[307] Both Stephen Cowan and Helen McDowell have noted that Hogarth's *Beer Street* (1751) (Figure 10) contains multiple examples of working people engaged in reading, with a butcher and blacksmith reading the *Daily Advertiser* and a recent speech by the King. Two fish-women are reading a ballad sheet and a porter carrying a basket of books to be delivered to a trunk-maker, again, a very lowly profession requiring little skill.[308]

Figure 10: Detail from William Hogarth, *Beer Street*

Courtesy: British Museum

In many of his works, Hogarth was keen either to critique the world as it is, or depict it as it could be, but how realistic was his assumption that working people might routinely be reading for information, instruction and pleasure?

Reading in the lives of working people

Definitionally, non-writers have left few traces of their literary activities, but there are occasional glimpses of their reading habits through alternative sources: for example, visitors to

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[307] Stephens and Hawkins, *Prints and Drawings III-I*, p. 674; For the relative status of different trades, see R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practised ...* (London: T. Gardner, 1747), pp. 333–40.

[308] Steven Cowan, 'The Growth of Public Literacy in Eighteenth-Century England' (unpublished PhD, Institute of Education, University of London, 2012), p. 270; Paula McDowell, *The Invention of the Oral: Print Commerce and Fugitive Voices in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 1–3; Image: William Hogarth, *Beer Street*, 1751, British Museum Collection Database, cc,2.165: ©Trustees of the British Museum; Stephens and Hawkins, *Prints and Drawings III-I*, p. 816; Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p. 254.

England noted with some surprise the extent of reading among working men. In 1698, Francois Misson wrote that "at present there is hardly the meanest Peasant in England but what can read", whilst César de Saussure wrote in 1726 that "Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee-rooms in order to read the latest news. I have often seen shoeblacks and other persons of that class club together to purchase a farthing paper".[309] These Anglophile writers frequently wrote approvingly and probably in exaggerated terms of the virtues of English society, but it is reasonable to assume that their comments were based on at least some observational evidence.

There are plentiful examples of reading habits among better-educated working people recorded, for example, in the diaries and autobiographies of tradesmen. William Stout (1655-1752), an ironmonger trading in Lancaster, passed his spare time as an apprentice by "reading; or improving my selfe in arethmatick, survighing or other mathamatikall sciences". He read throughout his working life and continued to divert himself in retirement with "reading and writing and walking in the feilds".[310] Edmund Harrold (1678-1721) was a wigmaker and barber operating in the Manchester area. His trade was a relatively lowly one and ill-paid, but he supplemented his income by buying and selling books and pamphlets. He delighted in this book trade, dealing mostly in religious texts but also buying, reading and selling books or pamphlets on a variety of other topics. It is likely that his diary does not record everything he read but, as a sample taken over a period of four weeks in June/July 1712, he mentioned that he "Borrowed Sherlock on Death and Judgement. Began this night a little, I like it very well", "Read ye Mercury for May", "read a litle of B[isho]p Hall Invis[ible] World", "Br[ough]t B[isho]p Beveridge on Restitution to read. Cost 1d. Ive read it twice over. Its a good sermon, and practicall", and "Read some of Sparks and Comber and Sherlocke *etc*".[311] Thomas Turner, the East Hoathly shopkeeper, had on his shelves plays by Centlivre, Cibber and Congreve, novels by Richardson and Sterne, various sermons, works of poetry, journals, newspapers and magazines, reference works, and advice manuals. David Vaisey, the editor of his diary, lists the titles of some 110 books and four journals that Turner read or otherwise mentioned during the 11 years for which pages of his diary survive.[312] Naomi Tadmor's work on the Turner household suggests reading was as much a communal as a solitary activity with Thomas or his wife Peggy reading aloud in the evenings from a wide range of print material including books, sermons,

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[309] Henri Misson, *Memoirs and Observations in His Travels over England …*, trans. by John Ozell (London: D. Browne and others, 1719), p. 17; César de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I. & George II.: The Letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to His Family*, trans. by van Muyden (London: E. P. Dutton and company, 1902), p. 162.
[310] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 80–81, 105, 201.
[311] Edmund Harrold, *The Diary of Edmund Harrold, Wigmaker of Manchester 1712-15*, ed. by Craig Horner (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), pp. 10, 13, 14, 18.
[312] Appendix D, Turner, *Diary*, pp. 347–53, v–vi.

newspapers and journals.[313] Turner also lent books to others: over the course of three weeks in early 1756 he lent Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* to a gardener, a volume of Richard Steele's *Guardian* journal to a female neighbour and a collection of plays to his father-in-law.[314]

These are examples of reading for pleasure among the better educated, but authors were also conscious of an appetite among working people for reading for improvement. Among many examples, Daniel Defoe published guides for tradesmen (1726), Nicholas Zinzano and John Barnard provided advice for apprentices (1725 and 1742 respectively) and Eliza Haywood published general rules of behaviour for servant-maids (1743).[315] Hannah Glasse consciously addressed her cookery book to those "Ignorant and Unlearned" servants who were wanting in their cookery skills, believing that "every Servant who can but read will be capable of making a tollerable good Cook". She avoided "the high, polite Stile" and wrote instead "in so plain and full a Manner, that the most illeterate and ignorant Person, who can but read, will know how to do every Thing in Cookery well".[316]

Evidence from estate inventories suggests that book ownership among the middling ranks was common. Such inventories were drawn up following a death to list those possessions that could be sold to facilitate the settlement of the deceased's debts, and they can sometimes therefore provide valuable evidence of reading habits.[317] Lorna Wetherill, in her analysis of inventories drawn up

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[313] Tadmor, ''In the Even''', p. 166.

[314] Quoted in Tadmor, ''In the Even''', p. 168.

[315] Defoe, *English Tradesman*; John Barnard, *A Present for an Apprentice; or, A Sure Guide to Gain Both Esteem and Estate. With Rules for His Conduct ...*, 4th edn (London: Hodges, 1740); Nicholas Zinzano, *The Servants Calling; with Some Advice to the Apprentice ...* (London, 1725); Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant-Maid: Or, the Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem. Under the Following Heads. Observance. Avoiding Sloth. Sluttishness. ...* (London: printed and publish'd by T. Gardner, 1743).

[316] Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy* (London: Printed for the Author, 1747).

[317] Tom Arkell, 'The Probate Process', in *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, ed. by Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans, and Nigel Goose (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 6–8.

between 1675 and 1725, indicates that ownership of books across different occupational categories varied from between 4% among husbandmen to 39% among gentry (Table 9).[318]

Table 9: Frequency of Ownership of books in a sample of Inventories 1675-1725

Occupation	Ownership of books %
Dealing Trades	27
Gentry	39
Craft trades	17
Yeomen	18
Husbandmen	4

Source: Weatherill, Consumer Behaviour, 184

Even the poor sometimes owned books and Peter King found that 24% of the Essex pauper inventories he studied from 1710-1819 listed ownership of at least one book.[319] However, inventories identified only valuable items and their use as a guide to reading habits is very likely to underestimate ownership of print material since books were expensive items beyond the reach of many. The poor were much more likely to have owned cheaper printed matter such as chapbooks costing a few pence, journals and broadsheets (costing around one penny) or religious literature (often circulated free or sold at heavily subsidised cost by charities), and these were all well within the reach of low-income households. However, their value was such that they were not worth including in inventories.[320] Weatherill's dataset thus indicates a small book-owning pauper population but necessarily underestimates the extent of ownership of other printed matter.

Literate activity was not restricted to reading. There is evidence of note-keeping amongst cooks (Carolyn Steedman has shown that some also included their own verse in their notebooks) and Laura Wright has made a study of the use of non-standard spelling in bills written by servants and tradespeople.[321] Susan Whyman has documented extensive examples of working people engaged in letter-writing. For example, she describes courtship correspondence (1754-5) between a Jedediah Strutt, Derbyshire wheelwright's apprentice, and Elizabeth, a domestic servant. Despite "narrow & contracted" schooling, Jedidiah taught himself to read and write and, when Elizabeth went into service first in Derby and then London, they wrote to each other about a wide range of

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[318] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 184.
[319] Table 7.1, Peter King, 'Pauper Inventories and the Material Lives of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in *Chronicling Poverty*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock, Peter King, and Pamela Sharpe (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997), p. 162.
[320] Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Woburn Press, 1971), pp. 127–30; Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 48.
[321] Carolyn Steedman, 'Poetical Maids and Cooks Who Wrote', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39.1 (2005), 1–27; Laura Wright, 'Non-Standard Spellings as Evidenced by Servants', Tradesmen's and Shopkeepers' Bills', in *The Language of Public and Private Communication in a Historical Perspective*, ed. by Nicholas Brownlees, Gabriella Del Lungo, and John Denton (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 161–90.

topics including discussion of the books they read.[322] This is not a lone example: the Appendix to Whyman's book attests to a wide-ranging archive of non-elite correspondence spanning the eighteenth century, and her book provides many examples of letters written by working people on topics from the utilitarian to the poetic.[323] We thus have at least suggestive evidence that reading and writing skills were more widely possessed, and it is helpful to establish how those skills were gained.

Acquisition of literacy skills

Whilst several people were (like Jedediah Strutt) largely self-taught, schooling was generally seen as an essential first step to betterment. William Stout, the ironmonger, received a "fair education", attending first the Free School at Bolton-le-Sands from age seven and then the Grammar School at Heversham for his final year, leaving school at age fourteen. This amount of schooling was, he reported, generally felt necessary for those destined to learn a trade.[324] This view was supported more generally by, for example, Giles Jacob writing in 1717:

> Children cannot be too early plac'd abroad to School, at first when young, under a careful and religious Mistress, who will spare no Pains to discharge her Duty; from thence they may be in due time removed to some learned and diligent Master, of a strict Discipline, under whose Tuition they may not only be taught *Latin*, and other Languages, but learn, by his Example, how to take religious Courses. [325]

Stout valued his own education and wanted to secure it for others. As a trusted local tradesman of some standing, he frequently found himself appointed as executor of the estate of deceased neighbours or fellow tradespeople. As a consequence, he often became responsible for securing the futures of their children and he was particularly concerned for them to obtain an education that could lead them to be self-sufficient. When John Johnson, a local maltster, died in 1694 Stout was administrator of his estate. He ensured that Johnson's elder son remained in school until he was 15 to prepare him for a life of trade whilst the daughter came to live in Stout's household where he kept her to school until she was sixteen years of age so she could learn to "write, sawe, knit and other nessesary imploy".[326] In 1701, Stout again found himself administering the will of his good friend and neighbour, Augustin Greenwood, a wholesale grocer. He resisted pressure to place the older son (aged twelve) into an apprenticeship and kept him at school for a

[322] Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 96–100.

[323] Whyman, *Pen and People*, pp. 232–35.

[324] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 71.

[325] Giles Jacob, *Essays Relating to the Conduct of Life …*, 3rd edn (London: J. Hooke, 1730), p. 11. See also Campbell, *London Tradesman*, pp. 19–21.

[326] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 110–12.

further two years to learn writing and accounts.[327] In 1708 Stout had "a parish apprintice put upon me, about ten years of age, [...] I sent him to the free schoole for at least fower years, and he learned well to the entring into Greek, and could write well".[328] In 1728 Stout was executor of Alice Greenwood's estate, and decided to educate her two sons in "schoole learning, writing, arethmatick and accounts, as much as could be here".[329]

Later in the century the gardener Joseph Morton recorded in his letters his struggles to earn a living as he moved from one ill-paid job to another. Nonetheless, he was determined to keep his children in the local free school, "I allways thought they were Better there then in the Streets" - at five years old his son William was already a fluent reader, "The M*r* says he neaver had a Better of his age in Schole for tho he is only 5 years old he Reads with Some that is 17".[330]

There is, therefore, a deal of anecdotal evidence to attest to the importance attached to schooling. Peter Earle has adopted a more methodological survey, analysing the biographies of condemned prisoners at Newgate Gaol taken down by the chaplain James Guthrie (the 'Ordinary's Account') between 1725 and 1746.[331] Destined to be hanged at Tyburn, these men and women came from across the social spectrum, although the majority were from the lower social classes. Whilst some were London-born, many migrated to London in search of a better life - Earle has estimated that only around one-quarter to one-third of adult Londoners were native-born.[332] In his accounts, Guthrie divided prisoners into three social groups: sons of 'mean' parents (the poor), those of 'honest' parents (artisans, small shopkeepers *etc*) and the 'genteel' (from homes with private or rentier incomes). Most 'mean' male prisoners had received at least some education, there being very few who were entirely illiterate, and a few had received enough education to fit them for the better trades (perhaps two to three years of education). Almost all 'honest' male prisoners had received what was described as a 'good' education (usually seven or eight years of schooling) covering at least reading, writing and arithmetic to qualify them for business. Those from 'genteel' homes also had seven or eight years of schooling but at better schools usually offering Latin, Greek and accounting. Among female prisoners, those of 'mean' families often received little or no schooling but all girls from 'honest' homes had some schooling, usually reading and sewing.

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[327] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 133–35.
[328] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 154. For a discussion of pauper apprentices, see Steve Hindle, '"Waste" Children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor Laws, c. 1598–1697', in *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850*, ed. by Penelope Lane, Neil Raven, and K.D.M. Snell (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 15–46.
[329] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 199.
[330] Quoted in Whyman, *Pen and People*, pp. 89–91.
[331] Earle, *City Full of People*, p. 26.
[332] Earle, *City Full of People*, p. 19.

'Genteel' girls received the same diet but more extensively.[333] Prisoners hanged at Tyburn could hardly be considered representative of society at large, yet it is striking how many of them had received at least some schooling. It is therefore useful to consider the general prevalence of schools in the early century.

Schooling

Elementary schools taught basic skills to boys in reading, writing and arithmetic and to girls in reading and sewing. As a number of commentators have noted, their availability expanded greatly from the post-Restoration period due to several factors. New benefactors channelled their charitable giving into parish schools or guaranteed free places for the poor in existing schools, whilst elsewhere schools were built and supported by subscription or through a voluntary increase in the poor rate.[334] This was variously seen as a pious act in encouraging dissemination of the Bible, a more general act of charity, or a pragmatic investment as educating poor children would prepare them for apprenticeships, relieving the parish of their burden (an example we have already met being that of the parish apprentice John Robinson being placed with William Stout). Typical of these developments was the school established in Elland, Halifax by the will of Grace Ramsden (1734) to provide for 24 poor boys to be taught:

> to read the English language, and write a plain, legible hand or character, and to understand common arithmetic, so as the said children may be thereby better qualified to gain a livelihood than the children of such poor parents usually are.[335]

However, some viewed the development of charity schools as politically motivated. The dissenter Dudley Ryder lamented in his 1716 diary, "the mischief that is likely to come to the nation by the means of the charity schools that are erected about London especially, which are most of them in the hands of the Tories and the clergy".[336] As a consequence of such disquiet, there was a parallel development of dissenting schools often offering free places for the dissenting poor.[337] Other schools developed as business ventures in response to increased demand but they varied in

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[333] Earle, *City Full of People*, pp. 26–35.

[334] Joan Simon, 'Post-Restoration Developments: Schools in the County 1660-1700', in *Education in Leicester, 1540-1940; a Regional Study*, ed. by Brian Simon (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1968), pp. 27–54; Craig Rose, 'Evangelical Philanthropy and Anglican Revival: The Charity Schools of Augustan London, 1698–1740', *The London Journal*, 16.1 (1991), 35–65; Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 65–69.

[335] Quoted in L. J. Parr, 'The History of Libraries in Halifax & Huddersfield from the Mid-Sixteenth Century to the Coming of the Public Libraries', *Doctoral Thesis, University of London.* (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of London, 2003), p. 60.

[336] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 165.

[337] Simon, 'Post-Restoration Developments', pp. 27–28, 52–53; Joan Simon, 'Was There a Charity School Movement? The Leicestershire Evidence', in *Education in Leicester, 1540-1940; a Regional Study*, ed. by Brian Simon (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1968), pp. 55–102 (p. 62); Joan Simon, 'From Charity School to Workhouse in the 1720s: The SPCK and Mr Marriott's Solution', *History of Education*, 17.2 (1988), 113–29.

quality, some being taught by highly qualified individuals (such as the scrivener and one-time excise officer John Cannon who we will meet in Chapter 6) but others were small-scale and "taught by persons for what they can get".[338] However, the major factor governing the expansion of education was a concern for the moral and religious health of the poor which led to the establishment of charitable institutions on a significant scale. The church school movement flourished in the years after the accession of William and Mary, establishing schools across England. The most prolific of these organisations, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), claimed that by 1723 it had established or requisitioned some 1,329 schools offering education to 23,421 students, although this figure has been disputed.[339] However, if the figure is close to being correct and assuming that these children received an average of three years of elementary education, then this single organisation was, by the 1720s, providing basic education to around 5% of the child population.[340] This is in addition to the work of other charitable enterprises as well as the plethora of free, parish and private schools and a variety of ad hoc arrangements.[341]

The reach of schooling and its impact on reading levels is difficult to assess with any degree of certainty but it could be extensive: Peter Earle reports that, by the early 1730s, the forty-eight London workhouses were providing two hours' instruction daily to some 2,000 children and Victor Neuburg's analysis of the annual register of parish poor children in St Mary, Islington shows that in the period 1767-1810 74.5% of parish poor boys and 75.7% of parish poor girls were marked in the register as being able to read.[342] It must also be remembered that children's first teachers were often their parents and, whilst evidence is very sparse, there are some limited indications of early tuition in reading. Kenneth Carlton and Margaret Spufford provide an interesting insight drawn from one Herefordshire school which, between 1689 and 1708, recorded children's reading ability on entry. Its records show that of the 127 boys from all social groups that entered in this period,

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[338] SPCK Returns for 1718, quoted in Simon, 'Charity School Movement', p. 78; Susan Skedd, 'Women Teachers and the Expansion of Girls' Schooling in England, c. I760-1820', in *Gender in Eighteenth Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 101–25 (pp. 101–2).

[339] M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 18–24; Simon, 'Charity School Movement', pp. 79–80.

[340] Calculation of SPCK's contribution is based on a total population of 5.37m (Wrigley and Schofield) and average life expectancy of 35 (Wrigley et al). Data sources: E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 533; E. A. Wrigley and others, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 283.

[341] Simon, 'Post-Restoration Developments', p. 36.

[342] Earle, *City Full of People*, p. 23; Neuburg, *Popular Education*, pp. 170–74, Appendix (iii).

nearly a third of five-year-olds and half of six-year-olds could already read when they started at the school.[343]

It seems then that in the early eighteenth century, very many working people typically had the opportunity to acquire necessary reading skills with at least some of them enjoyed reading, and many were writing for work or communication. We must finally explore the third area set out in the introduction to this chapter, the accessibility of reading material.

Access to print culture

Printing had been strictly controlled in the later seventeenth century through a series of licensing acts which had limited the printing of books and pamphlets to just twenty London master printers, the two Universities and the Archbishopric of York. Additionally, all printed material had to be submitted for pre-publication approval to prevent the distribution of "seditious, treasonable and unlicensed books and pamphlets".[344] This had a substantial deadening effect on publication and, when the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695, the production of printed materials mushroomed.[345] Although a small number of licensed and unlicensed newspapers had been published in London following the Glorious Revolution, removal of the Act saw very many more being published - Jeremy Black estimates that 44,000 copies of newspapers were printed each week by 1704 and Roy Porter suggests that 2.5m copies were sold annually in 1713, serving a national population of around 5m people.[346] In addition to newsprint a new form of journalism, the essay journal, proved very popular, the first being *The Tatler* in 1709 quickly followed by others so that, during 1714 alone, some 23 different journal titles are recorded as being in publication in London.[347] The price of these

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[343] Kenneth Charlton and Margaret Spufford, 'Literacy, Society and Education', in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. by David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 13–54 (pp. 16–17).

[344] Charles II, 1662, 'An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious Treasonable and Unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses', in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80*, ed. by John Raithby (Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), v, 428–35; Raymond Astbury, 'The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and Its Lapse in 1695', *Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, s5-XXXIII.4 (1978), 296–322 (p. 297).

[345] For a full account of the lapse of the Licensing Act, see Astbury, 'Licensing Act'; and Black, *The English Press*, pp. 8–10.

[346] Black, *The English Press*, p. 12; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 78.

[347] Based on searches of 'Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection'; 'Eighteenth Century Journals', *Adam Matthew Digital* <http://www.18thcjournals.amdigital.co.uk.uea.idm.oclc.org/> [accessed 9 December 2012]; and 'British Periodicals', *ProQuest* <https://search-proquest-com.uea.idm.oclc.org/britishperiodicals/index?accountid=10637> [accessed 9 December 2012].

newspapers and journals varied between one farthing and tuppence depending on the quality of paper used and their size and so affordable by many.

The number of printers also expanded to meet the new demand and they happily printed anything that would sell whilst keeping an eye on the still stringent sedition laws. Books or pamphlets were usually published, and costs underwritten, by the printers themselves or were sponsored by the larger booksellers that often acted as agents for authors. However, if a work was likely to prove unprofitable or contentious, keen authors covered the costs either themselves or by subscription.[348] As a result, many works quickly reached the streets. Most were short in length (up to 90 quarto pages) and published as a pamphlet or chapbook (the terms being virtually interchangeable). These were usually printed on cheap paper, loosely stitched and paper-covered, reducing their sale price to a few pence. Whilst more prestigious or popular volumes (such as almanacks) might be sold in a bookshop, cheaper volumes were often sold by street hawkers (a mainly female occupation).[349]

There was a similar explosion in book publishing, both fiction and non-fiction, particularly the new novel form. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) proved so popular that it went through six editions, selling some 6,000 copies, in its first four months. Twenty years later Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* proved equally popular and sold 20,000 copies in just fourteen months.[350] A search of the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) suggests that, in the 1710s alone, over 25,000 books were published.[351] To put that number into some perspective, it suggests that some 420 books per million population were being published annually in that decade. By comparison, in the 2010s the very lively British book market published seven times that figure including digital titles (at 2,800 titles per million population, it is the highest publishing nation). More typically, the USA, at 959 titles per million population, currently publishes just over twice as many books *pro rata* as the emerging 1710s British book trade.[352] Given the very different social conditions, levels of literacy, wealth and available technology, the early eighteenth-century English book market can therefore be thought of as remarkably buoyant.

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[348] James Raven, 'The Book Trades', in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2001), pp. 1–34.

[349] Margaret Hunt, 'Hawkers, Bawlers, and Mercuries', *Women & History*, 3.9 (1984), 41–68.

[350] Suarez, 'Towards a Bibliometric Analysis', p. 48.

[351] 'English Short Title Catalogue', Accessed 29/01/2021. This could, of course, be a significant under-estimate since the ESTC, perforce, lists only those titles that have survived.

[352] Alison Flood, 'UK Publishes More Books per Capita than Any Other Country, Report Shows', *The Guardian*, 22 October 2014, section Books <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/22/uk-publishes-more-books-per-capita-million-report>.

These bound volumes were, of course, luxury items readily available only to the better off - the initial volume of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* with a simple binding was priced at a modest five shillings but that would have cost an artisan his entire weekly income. The average price of novels was closer to seven shillings and high-quality bindings could cost very much more. However, popular works could often be obtained more cheaply as pirated editions, as condensed novels in chapbook form, or bought on the second-hand market and, importantly, they were also serialised in newspapers, bringing them within the reach of many. For instance, *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 78 instalments in the *London Penny Post* and simultaneously in 145 instalments in the rival *Parker's Penny Post*.[353] Samuel Richardson's *Joseph Andrews* could be read in serial form in *The London Daily Post* for one-farthing per issue in 1742 and the *Arabian Nights* was serialised in *Parker's London News* in a momentous 445 instalments, beginning in 1723 and spread over three years.[354]

Once bought, books were frequently exchanged or lent - we have already noted that Thomas Turner lent his books to friends. Costs could also be shared. For example, Thomas Turner subscribed to *Martin's Magazine* jointly with a friend, paying a larger contribution so that he could keep the copies.[355] There had already been a long though limited tradition of town or parish libraries providing books for loan: the library in Bury St. Edmunds had been established in about 1595 and that for Ipswich in 1612.[356] But such libraries were not widespread, and many limited borrowing to elites such as the clergy or the freemen of the town. The first public municipal library was endowed in Norwich in 1608, followed closely by Ipswich in 1612 and Bristol in 1615.[357] Booksellers quickly realised the potential for renting out their stock and this became much more common early in the eighteenth century - Figure 11 illustrates an advertisement for one such early adopter, Thomas Bickerton, who combined buying and selling books with a circulating library and then expanded his business into bookselling, publishing and printing:[358]

[353] Pat Rogers, 'Cross-Sections (4): 1716–1720', in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, ed. by Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 95; Nicholas Seager, 'The Novel's Afterlife in the Newspaper, 1712–1750', in *The Afterlives of Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, ed. by Daniel Cook and Nicholas Seager (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 111–32 (p. 118).

[354] Seager, 'Novel's Afterlife', pp. 111, 114.

[355] Turner, *Diary*, p. 23.

[356] Michael David Reed, 'Ipswich in the Seventeenth Century.' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Leicester, 1978), p. 17; Paul Kaufman, 'The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 57.7 (1967), 1–67 (p. 40).

[357] Michael Powell, 'Endowed Libraries for Towns', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 2: 1640–1850*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II, 83–101 (pp. 83–84).

[358] 'British Book Trade Index' <http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/advanced/> [accessed 24 September 2019]; 'Advertisement', *British Apollo*, 24 August 1709, Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspapers Collection; Kaufman, 'The Community Library', p. 12 n.7.

Figure 11: Advertisement: Books bought and exchanged

der our Hands this fift day of June, 1709. *John Bei*
Curate, *Charles Baron, Richard Bowell*, Church warde
John Moore, Overseer.

Ready Money for any Parcel or Library of Boo
in all Languages and faculties whatever; likew
Books Exchang'd and lent to Read, by *Tho. Bickerton*,
the *Rofe* and *Crown* next the Gate-way leading into t
Blue-Coat-Hofpital by the Pump in *Little-Britain.*

Henry Bateman, of *Drury-Lane*, Having labour'd und
a deficiency of Sight for feven Years, infomuch, th
for fome confiderable time I was totally Blind, occa
on'd by an *Amaurofis* (vulgarly term'd a *Gutta Seren*
and after I had ineffectually apply'd my felf to feve

Source: British Apollo August 24, 1709 (excerpt)

By mid-century, this practice had developed into formal circulating libraries with some carrying extensive stock. The first circulating libraries were established in Bath and Edinburgh in 1723, followed by London in 1739 and, by the end of the century, there were 122 in London and another 268 in the provinces. Membership fees could vary between a half and one guinea per year with an additional charge of just a penny per volume, well within reach of the more successful craftsman's or professional's family.[359] Smaller more informal book clubs also developed often with around 20 members who contributed a regular subscription to purchase books which would then circulate among members, making them also available for members of their households.[360] At least one book club felt moved to restrict onward borrowing outside the home by fining members who did so, "Whoever lends a book out of his own family, or receives one from any person but the librarian, forfeits one shilling".[361] These local book clubs began to proliferate from early in the century, mainly being formed among the more prosperous members of towns. Typical of this was the Sedbergh book club (1728) whose minute books have been explored by K.A. Manley.[362] The membership of the Sedbergh club was heavily weighted towards the well-educated including the vicar and curates, the headmaster, and leading benefactors, farmers and landowners whilst other unidentified members might have been leading tradesmen. With subscriptions for book purchase set at ten shillings per year and a monthly dinner (costing up to six pence), this would have brought such a club into the reach of established artisans, although the club's social exclusivity based on invitation may have excluded many. Book purchases were weighted towards the theological but also included

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[359] Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 23–25. For an overview of libraries, see James Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 175–201.

[360] Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779*, p. 24.

[361] Appendix D, Kaufman, 'The Community Library', p. 57.

[362] K. A. Manley, 'Rural Reading in Northwest England: The Sedbergh Book Club, 1728-1928', *Book History*, 2.1 (1999), 78–95 (pp. 80–86).

works of history, natural philosophy, current affairs, law, drama, fiction, poetry and a journal. At least one book was borrowed by a woman, who may have been the sister of a member. Unusually, the Sedbergh book club donated its books to the parish library once members had read them, bringing them within reach of parishioners. More typically, book clubs tended to distribute books among members at the end of the year. W.M. Jacob has noted that parochial libraries (parish libraries usually set up by formal trust, endowment or other formal arrangement) expanded rapidly in this period from 69 in 1680 to 267 by 1760.[363]

London dominated book printing for much of the eighteenth century - 77% of the book titles listed in the English Short Title Catalogue for 1703 were published in London, falling only marginally to 70% by 1753.[364] However, the lapse of the Licensing Act was felt more widely in other ways, and the new print culture also reached first into provincial towns and from there into the countryside. By 1700 the English provinces were receiving posts three times a week, providing a mechanism for the distribution of news and opinion in the form of journals and pamphlets.[365] In return, the post also took news from the provinces for inclusion in the London newspapers via a growing network of correspondents.

The post facilitated the distribution of books, and the number of booksellers in provincial towns increased substantially over the first half of the century so that even a medium-sized town such as Ipswich could boast seven people engaged in the trade by the 1750s serving an urban population of around 8,000 as well as its rural hinterland, and other Suffolk towns hosted a further twenty-one people listed as booksellers. Norwich, at that time Britain's third largest city after London and Bristol, had some 24 booksellers to serve its population of 36,000 whilst Bristol (population 50,000) could boast only 6 booksellers.[366] Printing itself was also becoming more widespread with provincial printers setting up in substantial towns. Whilst many focused on the printing of ephemera (invitations, visiting cards, commercial lists *etc*) some also published both local newspapers and more substantial works and there was also a thriving market in publishing or

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[363] W. M. Jacob, 'Libraries for the Parish: Individual Donors and Charitable Societies', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 2: 1640–1850*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II, 65–82 (p. 65).

[364] Suarez, 'Towards a Bibliometric Analysis', p. 50.

[365] Michael Harris, 'London Newspapers', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5: 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 413–33 (p. 415).

[366] 'British Book Trade Index'; For further information about the development of the English provincial book trade, see Maureen Bell and John Hinks, 'The English Provincial Book Trade: Evidence from the British Book Trade Index', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5: 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), V, 335–51; Peter Borsay, *The Eighteenth Century Town, 1688-1820* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 42.

reprinting chapbooks.[367] The ESTC lists 66 works printed in Suffolk between 1700 and 1750 (46 in Ipswich and 20 in Bury St Edmunds) including administrative works such as Poll Books, newspapers and reprints of works published elsewhere (a speciality of the Bury St Edmunds printers). There were also privately published works such as poems, travel diaries or covering interests as diverse as smallpox inoculation in Bury St Edmunds, navigation in the Fens and John Kirby's travels; most however were sermons and other religious works.[368]

Such works do not easily survive and these examples probably represent only a very small fraction of the books, pamphlets and broadsheets printed by the (at least) nine printers and publishers working in the two towns in the first half of the century (five in Ipswich and four in Bury St Edmunds).[369] Figure 12 is an example of one such work, a contribution to the debate of a national *cause célèbre*; this pamphlet emanated from the printworks of John Bagnall who established and printed the *Ipswich Journal* from 1720.[370]

Figure 12: *The Wonder of Wonders* 1726
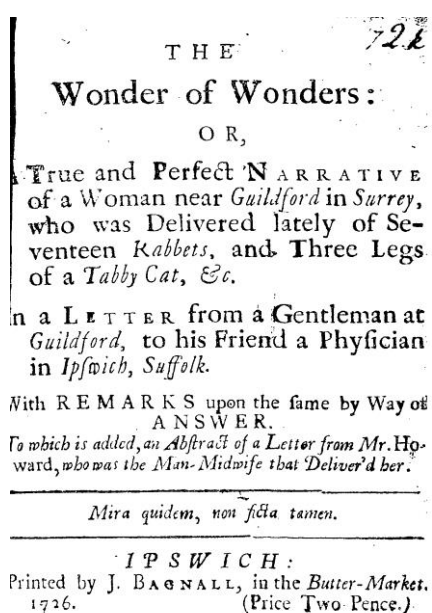
Bookshops were also expanding greatly and offered stock bought speculatively as well as operating as agents for the larger London bookshops, ordering books chosen by customers from their substantial lists. In some cases, books were the main activity of the bookseller but for many,

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[367] For a discussion of one such newspaper, see C.Y. Ferdinand, 'Selling It to the Provinces: News and Commerce Round Eighteenth-Century Salisbury', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. by John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 393–411.

[368] 'English Short Title Catalogue'.

[369] 'British Book Trade Index'.

[370] Frontispiece, Anon, *The Wonder of Wonders: Or, A True and Perfect Narrative of a Woman Near Guildford in Surrey, Who Was Delivered Lately of Seventeen Rabbets, and Three Legs of a Tabby Cat, &c. In a Letter from a Gentleman at Guildford, to His Friend a Physician in Ipswich, Suffolk...* (Ipswich: J. Bagnall, in the Butter-Market, 1726).

they formed a side-line, as in the case of the Manchester wigmaker, Edmund Harrold, for whom they were a useful commodity to be traded as well as sold: "I've got abundance of variety now of pamplytts. It cost me 4½d of [John] Chadwick and J[ames] Baynton Junior, and oyl and brandy".[371] Harrold's buying and selling practices give an insight into the breadth and complexity of trade in reading matter, with books and pamphlets frequently changing hands between booksellers in attempts to make a profit. Harrold's diary has multiple mentions of such deals, for example, "Paid Mr [John] Whitworth towards [a] parcell [of books] 2 shill[ings], and given him Ambrose Works to sell again … John Barlow bought 3 secondhand Hopkins to day".[372] Some booksellers extended the range of their activity over significant distances through a network of agents spread through the countryside. In the 1740s, The Glastonbury scrivener John Cannon acted as one such agent for T. Warren, a bookseller located some hundred miles away in Birmingham.[373] This spread of booksellers brought books and journals within the physical reach of both town dwellers and the very many countryfolk who came into the towns to visit, buy or sell.

Whilst bookshops were mainly static there were also travelling booksellers, including a certain Mr. Haworth who travelled across south-east England selling books in market towns as far apart as Canterbury, London, Ipswich and Northampton. John Feather has estimated that such networks of book distribution reached into almost every town and village.[374] Another important source of reading material was the travelling pedlars and hawkers selling chapbooks deep into the countryside both at the many fairs and also door-to-door. Margaret Spufford has described the reach of the chapmen, with chapbooks sold in great numbers for a few pence aimed at the semi-literate artisan or labourer.[375] They covered a wide variety of topics and were, according to Myles Davies writing in 1715, "penn'd by the meaner sort of Mechanicks and Tradesmen, as well as Scholars and Gentlemen". Davies preferred the term *pamphlet* which he defined as "any little Book or small Volume whatsoever, whether stitch'd or bound, whether good or bad, whether serious or ludicrous, Whether esteem'd Or slighted, *etc*".[376]

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[371] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 47.
[372] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 7, 8.
[373] John Cannon, *The Chronicles of John Cannon, Excise Officer and Writing Master*, ed. by John Money, 2 vols (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 453.
[374] John Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 13–14, 84.
[375] Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapman and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 5–6, *et seq*.
[376] Myles Davies, *Eikon Mikro-Biblike Libellorum, or, a Critical History of Pamphlets …* (Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1715), pp. 2, 9, 11.

Although some chapbooks were sold by the provincial booksellers, many were sold on the streets of towns by hawkers and in the villages by pedlars and hawkers.[377] Spufford found difficulty in estimating the number of pedlars and hawkers because licences were required only for selling outside their own district and, in any case, many (perhaps 80%) operated without a licence. She reports considerable regional variation with few licences issued in East Anglia even though hawkers or chapmen are recorded in other circumstances - for example, the three fairs in Beccles listed up to six chapmen paying annual rents on stalls from 1675 onwards.[378] Nonetheless, the number of official licences does provide some indication of the level of activity, with some 2,503 issued in 1704-05 alone. Jeroen Salman estimates that around 20% of licenced pedlars and hawkers were also chapmen (ie, carrying chapbooks in their packs) and a similar proportion might also apply to unlicensed sellers, suggesting that there were around 2,500 licensed and unlicensed chapmen in operation in the 1700s.[379] For so many pedlars to carry chapbooks must indicate that they were a profitable sales item since considerable investment was needed to purchase the pedlar's stock, and space in the pack was at a premium. Although they carried limited stock, such sellers brought reading materials into every part of the countryside.

Women and print

We noted earlier that female literacy based on signature evidence has been estimated to be around half the level of men but we also saw that the curriculum for girls usually substituted sewing for writing so that a high proportion of literate girls would not have learnt to write. Laura Gowing's research on working women shows that a high proportion of girls entering apprenticeship in the seventeenth century signed their names, suggesting that they were literate by around age 14. She also notes that indentures often specified that reading would be taught as part of the apprenticeship.[380] It is therefore highly likely that reported female rates seriously underestimate actual female literacy, particularly when we consider the involvement of women in the print trade.

There are numerous examples of women engaged across the book market, particularly in the early century.[381] There were celebrated female authors and playwrights (for example Delarivier

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[377] Neuburg, *Popular Education*, pp. 122–25.

[378] Spufford, *Small Books*, pp. 118, 124.

[379] Jeroen Salman, *Pedlars and the Popular Press: Itinerant Distribution Networks in England and the Netherlands 1600-1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 103–12.

[380] Laura Gowing, *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 149–50, 154–55.

[381] See, for example, Isobel Grundy, 'Women and Print: Readers, Writers and the Market', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5: 1695–1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 146–60.

Manley, Eliza Haywood, Suzanna Centlivre and Charlotte Lennox) and many others published diaries, advice literature, essays and poetry; women were particularly active in writing on religious themes through essays and chapbooks.[382] They were also actively engaged in editing or writing for journals - *The Female Tatler* began publishing just three months after the appearance of the first essay journal, *The Tatler.* Whilst the authorship and gender of the various writers for *The Female Tatler* is disputed (with many publishing under pseudonyms), it is highly likely that at least some of its authors were female.[383] Other examples of female magazine editors include Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Nonsense of Common-Sense* (1737-8) and Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator* (1744-6).[384]

Women were also heavily involved in print production and publishing; for example, later editions of *The Female Tatler* were published by a Mrs Baldwin, and women also had key roles in merchandising. From at least the 1660s, women could be admitted to the Stationers' Company by patrimony, widowhood or by purchase and this had permitted them to engage in the legitimate trade as printers, publishers and booksellers, but others escaped the purview of the Stationers' Company by operating outside the City boundaries. Following the lapse of the Licensing Act many more became directly involved in running printworks or bookshops.[385]

Their most visible presence was as street hawkers selling almanacks, broadsides, news sheets, pamphlets and pirated books. These materials were obtained from the mercuries (also mainly women) who bought print material wholesale from the printers and sold them on to the hawkers, thus forming an essentially female workforce of petty entrepreneurs.[386] Some mercuries may even have commissioned work direct - the *Mercurius deformatus* (1692) was footnoted as "Printed, and sold by the Mercury women".[387]

Women also represented an important market for printed works, and many improving texts were written with women in mind. As we saw in Chapter 2, dictionaries were often addressed to women as was much advice literature, from Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling* (1673) to John

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[382] Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 121–24.

[383] For a discussion, see the Introductions to Bernard de Mandeville, *By a Society of Ladies: Essays in The Female Tatler*, ed. by Maurice M. Goldsmith, Primary Sources in Political Thought (Durham: University of Durham, 1999), pp. 41–48, and *The Female Tatler*, ed. by Fidelis Morgan (London: Dent, 1992), pp. vii–ix.

[384] For many other examples of women editing or writing for journals, see *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1690-1820s: The Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Manushag N. Powell, The Edinburgh History of Women's Periodical Culture in Britain (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

[385] For a very full account of women's engagement in book production, see McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street*, pp. 33–62.

[386] Hunt, 'Hawkers, Bawlers, and Mercuries'; Grundy, 'Women and Print', p. 149.

[387] Anon, *Mercurius Deformatus: Or the True Observator.*, Early English Tract Supplement / A2:1[25], Early English Books Online (London: Printed, and sold by the Mercury women, 1692).

Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1761). Some overtly political tracts addressed women directly, such as Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) urging the establishment of Academies for women.[388] *The Tatler* (1709) was written both for gentlemen and the 'Fair Sex',[389] whilst its rival and counterpart *The Female Tatler* was aimed directly at women. Novels were perceived as particularly attractive to women and many of their plots placed women centre stage. Some authors took great pains to ensure that the female perspective was properly represented. For example, Samuel Richardson had a wide group of female collaborators to whom he submitted drafts of large sections of both *Clarissa* and *Pamela* for comment on plot and characters.[390] It is more difficult to evidence the engagement of rural working women in print culture but the existence of a wealth of chapbook literature aimed at women suggests there was an active market for such works.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that the reach of the printed word was likely to have been a great deal wider than early inferences from signature evidence might suggest. It has brought together scholarship across several related fields to explore the interactions of working people with print, shown that substantial numbers had the opportunity to learn to read as children and established that the printed word was available widely.[391]

Because many could read, it did not necessarily mean that they did read with any regularity or breadth nor that, if they read something, they would necessarily agree with its sentiments. The point of this chapter is not to suggest that an idea in wide written circulation (for example, concerning obligation) was necessarily widely held, only that it would have been widely understood, that it had currency and that it could provide a means of cultural exchange, what Naomi Tadmor has called a 'language community' which held an understanding of key language terms in common.[392] In the next chapter, we can therefore turn to the treatments of the language of obligation in print materials and consider them as a reflection of widely understood concepts and debates that would have been familiar to most classes of society, although possibly excluding the poorest.

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[388] Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies. Parts I and II*, ed. by Patricia Springborg (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2002).

[389] Sir Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. by Donald F Bond, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2017), p. vol.1, 15.

[390] Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779*, pp. 12–13.

[391] John Brewer has reached similar conclusions about the breadth and extent of the reading public in his *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the 18th Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc, 1997), pp. 167–97.

[392] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp. 13–16.

CHAPTER 5: WRITING ABOUT OBLIGATION

Introduction

Before embarking on an exploration of obligation in general discourses, it will be useful to pause and review where we have got to. In Chapter 2 we were interested in all mentions of OBLIGATION whether used casually, descriptively or purposefully, and we found that notions of obligation or obligingness formed part of the armoury of writers of many genres, deploying them with such a variety of meanings that subtle shades of expectation concerning both duty and conduct could be conveyed. Chapter 3 then focused on the philosophers of the period who initially reserved *obligation* to describe that inner sense of duty that expressed itself as a personal motivation to do the right thing. As the century progressed, successive thinkers began to interpret the term to describe the personal debt one owed first to individuals, then to significant groups and then finally to society as a whole. These thinkers gave much attention to *obliged* behaviour but only scant consideration of *obliging* behaviour.

The main task of this chapter will be to explore discussions of obligation in the many forms of writing intended for general consumption, the purpose being to examine what people intended to convey when they wrote about either their obligations or their willingness to oblige. We will be concerned with occasions when the terms were used explicitly but also with more oblique occasions in which actors used more varied language to explore their duty to behave in particular ways. We will unpick the wider shades of meaning discussed earlier and explore in greater depth questions that seem to have been particularly pertinent to eighteenth-century actors - *what duty do I owe to others and they to me?* and *what conduct can I expect of others and they of me?* Whilst these questions could at times be of critical importance, such as in principled reflection about the purpose of one's life or the choice of a spouse, they frequently arose in the ordinary waft and weave of eighteenth-century conversation, often dealing with the more mundane circumstances of social interaction. Towards the end of the chapter, we will test out the thesis developed in Chapter 3 that obligation was increasingly seen as a social as well as a personal debt and explore what this might tell us about how society itself was perceived.

Before embarking on the discussion, there are three important caveats to be addressed. Firstly, historians frequently face the difficulty of a sparsity of sources. This chapter has the opposite challenge – obligation or duty is directly referenced in over 160,000 eighteenth-century texts and there were very many more implied references to its senses of responsibility, burden or

complaisance.[393] In drawing out the different kinds of meaning and use of this language, examples have perforce been selected to illustrate an argument, although counter-examples might also have been found. Care has been taken to exemplify the major trends, supported where possible by statistical evidence, so that the examples used are representative of those trends. Secondly, the language of obligation permeated very many aspects of eighteenth-century cultural, political, moral and social life and the chapter examines a number of these topics. In such a wide-ranging chapter, there is not the room to rehearse the rich historiography that each topic has attracted nor its deep pre-history - none of these issues sprung fresh into the eighteenth-century mind but was borne of long antecedents. Clearly, concerns about duty, money, charity or relationships existed in earlier times but what was different about the eighteenth-century experience was the terms in which they were frequently discussed. Those earlier concerns had been usually expressed through the languages of religion, duty or propriety in comparison with eighteenth-century preoccupations with personal morality, affect or sociability. Since our focus is on this new language, discussion of those antecedents can be left to another time. Similarly, whilst some major authors are quoted (such as Daniel Defoe, Samual Richardson and Jonathan Swift), it is acknowledged that each has attracted long and detailed scholarly attention which cannot be encompassed in this thesis where those authors are simply employed to highlight how they were influenced by, and themselves influenced, major societal trends.

Lastly, it is important to emphasise that we will be dealing in this chapter with discourses, not behaviours: our focus is on how people *described* obligation not necessarily their beliefs about obligation nor their intentions and motives, and certainly not how they might have acted in their daily lives. Brian Cowan renders this distinction as being between the 'normative and the practical' contrasting thoughts and deeds - the distinction between the social 'ought' and the descriptive 'is'.[394] There is a frequent mismatch between what people say and what they believe and often an even greater disparity between what they say and how they behave, and we will concentrate on actual eighteenth-century practices in chapter six. The present chapter considers their discourses about obligation, the term 'discourse' being deployed here in its ordinary language sense of "The action or process of communicating thought by means of the spoken word" (OED) rather than as a

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[393] 'JISC Historical Texts'.
[394] Brian Cowan, 'What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England', *History Workshop Journal*, 51, 2001, 127–57 (p. 33).

reference either to its Foucauldian sense of discursive practice or to the technical field of discourse analysis.[395]

Changing usage over the century will sometimes be detected in the course of the chapter but shifts in usage are not always indicative of major shifts in thinking. New language can signal societal change (for example, revision of gender descriptions over the first decades of the twenty-first century) but sometimes they may simply be indications of changes in the art form itself (a recent example being the many new language terms spawned by short-form text messaging). The interactions between genre change and attitudinal change are important for the first decades of the eighteenth century because literary and essay forms underwent considerable development as they responded to changes in the law and literary fashion and also in public attitudes to morality. This could be most clearly seen on the stage and in the new novel form where plot themes often centred around questions of obligation and obligingness, so we will need to be alive to the impact of both the form and content of such works.[396] We will begin with the vexed early-century question of moral reform.

Genre change and moral debate

We saw in the previous chapter how the loosening of the licencing laws had encouraged an explosion in publishing, and this was accompanied by experimentation in new forms of both fictional and non-fictional works. However, whilst the loosening of regulation stimulated discussion of a wide range of political, religious and social ideas, there were opposing tendencies in questions of public morality. The period after the Glorious Revolution had brought a significant reappraisal of moral behaviour, partly as a reaction to the liberality of both the Carrollian court and the wider *beau monde* which was reflected in Restoration drama, and there were also more deep-seated concerns about the perceived spread of multiple forms of public vice including drunkenness, gambling, irreligion, prostitution and other forms of sexual licentiousness.[397] This section will explore the impacts of the debate on the writing of the period.

Campaigns for moral rearmament gathered powerful allies among the clergy and leading politicians; for example, some eighty-four Lords Temporal, Spiritual and Legal lent their names in

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[395] 'Discourse, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For cultural and linguistic distinctions in the use of 'discourse', compare its definition in Chris Barker, *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), pp. 54–55, with David Crystal, *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 148.

[396] For an account of the emergence of the novel, see Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); and Rogers, 'Cross-Sections (4): 1716–1720'.

[397] The foundational text on the moral reformation movement is Dudley W. R Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957).

support of the publication in 1699 of Josiah Woodward's *Account of the societies for reformation of manners*, the first such society having been established in 1691.[398] Importantly, moral reform had explicit royal support and Queen Mary intervened very early in her reign, writing to the Middlesex Justices in 1691 to urge them to enforce existing laws

> against the Prophanation of the Lord's-day, Drunkenness, Prophane Swearing and Cursing, and all other Lewd, Enormous, and Disorderly Practices, which, by a long continued neglect, and connivance of the Magistrates and Officers concerned, have universally spread themselves to the dishonour of God, and scandal of our Holy Religion. [399]

This was reinforced in 1697 with a formal proclamation by the king which reminded law officers and the clergy of their responsibility to pursue, prosecute and punish such wrongdoers.[400] There was extensive popular support for the moral reform movement and these pressures had a major impact on the print media and the stage.[401]

Antipathy to the stage had arisen (at least in part) from reaction to the perceived lewdness and immoral stances of restoration plays whose plots typically relied on self-indulgent characters giving rein to their sexual, social or violent urges - such highly visible moral laxity was considered particularly dangerous to public morality because the stage was seen as rather more available to the impressionable and the less-educated in comparison with print.[402] The oppositional stance of the moral reformation movement towards the theatre was exemplified in Jeremy Collier's lengthy and influential diatribe *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) which began "Being convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in debauching the age than the stage-poets, and playhouse… " and then continued with multiple descriptions of "Their Smuttiness of Expression; Their Swearing, Profainness, and Lewd Application of Scripture; Their Abuse of the

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[398] A. G. Craig, 'The Movement for the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1715' (unpublished Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1980); Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster …* (London, 1699).

[399] Mary II, *Her Majesties Gracious Letter to the Justices of the Peace in the County of Middlesex, For the Suppressing of Prophaneness and Debauchery* (London, 1691).

[400] King of England William III 1650-1702., *By the King, a Proclamation, for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness* (London: printed by Charles Bill, 1698).

[401] Karen Sonnelitter, 'The Reformation of Manners Societies, the Monarchy, and the English State, 1696–1714', *The Historian*, 72.3 (2010), 517–42 (p. 507); Aparna Gollapudi, *Moral Reform in Comedy and Culture, 1696-1747* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

[402] Simon Trussler, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 124–26; Michael Cordner, 'Playwright versus Priest: Profanity and the Wit of Restoration Comedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 209–25 (pp. 209–10); María José Mora and Manuel J. Gómez-Lara, 'Revolution and the Moral Reform of the Stage: The Case of Durfey's The Marriage-Hater Matched (1692)', in *Theatre and Culture in Early Modern England, 1650 - 1737: From Leviathan to Licensing Act*, ed. by Catie Gill (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 145–49.

Clergy; Their making their Top Characters Libertines, and giving them Success in their Debauchery".[403]

This text stimulated a pamphlet war both attacking and defending the theatre and led to playwrights showing much more caution in the moral tone of their works, a trend encouraged by successful prosecutions.[404] Indeed, many writers capitalised on this moral streak and achieved much public approval in adjusting both the conduct of their characters and their plots to explore moral themes, not least the new breed of female dramatists such as Mary de la Riviere Manley, Catherine Totter Cockburn, Mary Pix and Susannah Centlivre.[405]

Other shifts were taking place in fiction. The literature of the Restoration period had tended to emphasise imagined worlds, either mystical topics (such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) or fictions of the *beau monde*, depicting their supposed lives of romance, tragedy and farce.[406] This changed in the post-Revolutionary period and the most popular of the new fictional works used plots that reflected a fresh realism based in the here-and-now to explore the lived dilemmas and absurdities of everyday life, these quickly becoming the benchmarks of the new novel form.[407]

These themes of real-life moral dilemma led to obligation becoming a key plot device. Writers used ideas of duty very extensively in exploring the effects of major life decisions and regularly placed their characters in situations where they had to take morally correct actions against their natural inclination or, conversely, follow their passions in opposition to accepted standards, in either case causing the character to face the consequences. These central themes of moral rectitude were often didactic, emphasising the importance of compliance with moral or social norms - indeed, fiction was often judged as much by its moral correctness as its literary value. For example, Charles Gildon published a popular critique of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (each published in 1719) arguing that the author had offended social interests by failing to hold his hero accountable:

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[403] Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage. The Second Edition* (London: S. Keble, 1698), p. Preface, 2.

[404] Derek Hughes, 'Theatre, Politics and Morality', in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Vol 2, 1660 to 1895*, ed. by Joseph Donohue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 104.

[405] Hughes, 'Theatre, Politics and Morality', pp. 104–6; Mora and Gómez-Lara, 'Reform of the Stage', p. 145; Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 434–35; Marilyn L. Williamson, *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), pp. 166–67; Gollapudi, *Moral Reform*, pp. 49–62.

[406] For more nuanced accounts of Restoration fiction, see Gerd Bayer, 'Paratext and Genre: Making Seventeenth-Century Readers', in *Narrative Developments from Chaucer to Defoe*, ed. by Gerd Bayer and Ebbe Klitgård (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 199–218; and Thomas Keymer, 'Restoration Fiction', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by Alan Downie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[407] For an extended discussion of the disputed nature and origin of the novel form, see Brean S. Hammond and Shaun Regan, *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1–28.

> "to render any Fable worthy of being receiv'd into the Number of those which are truly valuable, it must naturally produce in its Event some useful Moral, either express'd or understood; but this of Robinson Crusoe, you plainly inculcate, is design 'd against a publick good".[408]

Defoe appears to have reacted to that criticism since the preface to *Moll Flanders* (1721) suggested that discerning readers "will be much more pleas'd with the moral, than the fable".[409]

Changes were also taking place in the nature and tone of non-fiction works. Religious works were keenly read and many preachers relished the opportunity offered by the lapse of the Licensing Act to reach a wider audience, publishing printed sermons in support of various religious, moral and political causes.[410] The popularity of these sermons in the early eighteenth century has occasionally been noted by commentators, sometimes arguing that one reason for their popularity may have been affordability. These works were frequently published as cheap pamphlets costing from 1d. to 1s. or even distributed free by sponsoring organisations such as the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, thus providing ready edification or entertainment for people with more limited means.[411] We can demonstrate quite how ubiquitous these texts were by considering the number of works that included the word *sermon/s* in their titles across the period (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Works containing *sermon/s* in their title
as a percentage of all works listed in the English Short Title Catalogue**
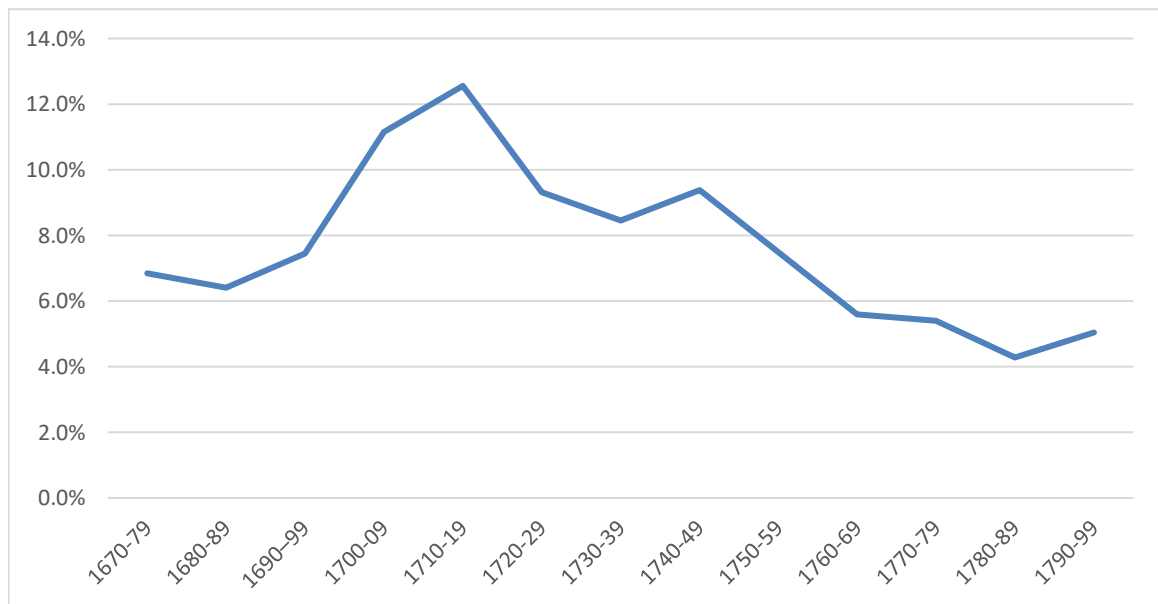
Source: ESTC, March 2023

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[408] Charles Gildon, *Robinson Crusoe Examin'd and Criticis'd*, ed. by Paul Dottin (J. M. Dent & sons ltd., 1923), pp. 82–83.
[409] Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. by Paul A. Scanlon (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 40.
[410] For extensive discussion, see Pasi Ihalainen, 'The Political Sermon in an Age of Party Strife, 1700–1720: Contributions to the Conflict', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. by Peter E. McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Jennifer Farooq, *Preaching in Eighteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013).
[411] For example, Farooq, *Preaching in London*, pp. 39, 74, 105.

The Table demonstrates that sermons and responses to sermons formed a substantial and increasing proportion of all printed works, rising from around 6.8% (928 titles) in the 1670s to a peak of 12.6% (3,237 titles) in the 1710s, with a total of over 28,000 titles (7.0%) published in the eighteenth century as a whole.[412] The 1710s certainly saw some controversial publications and responses, but these individual spats made only marginal impact on the peak number of sermons printed in that decade: for example, Henry Sacheverell's notorious *The Perils of False Brethren* received much attention but did not stimulate many direct sermon responses - of the 3,237 *sermon* records for this decade only 70 mentioned Sacheverell, 57 of those being authored by Sacheverell himself (including new editions of a small number of individual titles); works naming Sacheverell add a mere 0.2% to the decade peak.[413] Whilst some sermon texts were probably published in relatively short runs of perhaps 100 copies (similar to many other kinds of short-form print material) others such as Sacheverell's *False Brethren* may have sold as many as 100,000 copies.[414] This would indicate that amongst all the stories, ballads, broadsides, almanacks, technical tables, political tracts and other works published in the 1710s, fully one-eighth were either sermons or commentaries on sermons. This was in addition to other improving religious works - for example, Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* (1658) was reprinted or republished at least 166 times in the eighteenth century.[415]

Most of these texts focused on religious duty and their discussion of the challenges of living a religious life was therefore frequently couched in the language of obligation. The young law student Dudley Ryder often reflected on his religious reading and found himself wanting:

> Rose between 7 and 8. Read part of a sermon of Tillotson … I am only vexed with myself that what I hear or read in the way of religion has no more effect upon my life to assist my conduct, teach me to govern my passions, conquer my unruly inclinations and live by the rule of reason.[416]

This underlying concern for religious duty was reflected in other forms of writing. Robinson Crusoe (Daniel Defoe, 1719) began his fictional voyage on the spur of the moment, explicitly without seeking his parents' permission and "without asking God's Blessing". He quickly regretted his general godlessness and began to see his banishment to a desert island as a punishment, albeit a

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[412] 'English Short Title Catalogue'.

[413] Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren, Both in Church and State: Set Forth in a Sermon …* (London: H. Hills, 1710).

[414] Geoffrey Holmes, 'The Sacheverell Riots: The Crowd and the Church in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *Past & Present*, 72, 1976, 55–85 (p. 61).

[415] 'English Short Title Catalogue'. A similar search using JISC 'Historical Texts' yields 131 editions.

[416] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 219 (Sunday April 15, 1716).

benevolent one in which God watched over him and protected him.[417] Defoe's Moll Flanders (1722) experienced a similar conversion, although much later in her history as she awaited her fate in Newgate Prison, "I was cover'd with shame and tears for things past, and yet had at the same time a secret surprizing joy at the prospect of being a true penitent, and obtaining the comfort of a penitent, I mean the hope of being forgiven".[418] Defoe's religious morality pervaded his non-fiction: both his *Religious Courtship* (1722) and *Conjugal Lewdness; or Matrimonial Whoredom* (1727, later renamed *The Use and Abuse of the Marriage Bed*) stressed marriage as a holy ordinance and an equal partnership whilst *The Family Instructor* (1715) advised on the conduct of a religious household. Defoe's approach in these advisory works was practical as well as didactic, "we live in an age that does not want so much to know their duty as to practise it; not so much to be taught, as to be made obedient to what they have already learnt".[419]

Defoe often addressed multiple issues in his works, sometimes directly and at others with ironic undertones so that these texts can render alternative explanatory narratives. However, the language he chose in making his arguments reflected some of his preoccupations. His prescriptive works frequently explored secular as well as religious forms of obligation. *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725 and 1727) provided guidance in the conduct of business, the ostensible aim of this work being to provide "useful instructions for a young Tradesman" on the mechanics of business.[420] Whilst this included setting up shop, good relationships with suppliers and customers, the employment of staff and the keeping of accounts, there was also a strong moral thread which explicitly emphasised industry, honest dealing and maintaining a healthy balance between the sometimes conflicting obligations of trade, family and religion. These themes were reflected in the language Defoe employed. In an account concerning the conduct of trade, it is unsurprising to see business terms such as *goods*, *accounts, credit* and *debt* cropping up often (634, 350, 479 and 126 times respectively across the two volumes) but the frequency with which moral terms occur is noteworthy - *honesty* (431 times), *obligation/duty* (206 times), *trust* (110 times) and *God/religion/ Christian* (105 times). Defoe clearly considered that the moral dimensions of a tradesman's calling were worthy of serious attention.

He was not alone in this focus and many of the prescriptive or advice texts that included interpersonal content similarly addressed the obligations deriving from relationships, although not

[417] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by Thomas Keymer, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 9, 67, 79–80.

[418] Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 289.

[419] For a discussion, see Robert James Merrett, 'The Traditional and Progressive Aspects of Daniel Defoe's Ideas about Sex, Family, and Marriage', *English Studies in Canada*, 12.1 (1986), 1–22; Defoe, *The Family Instructor*, p. 2.

[420] Defoe, *English Tradesman*.

necessarily in religious terms. For example, several texts that offered 'careers guidance' emphasised duty, whether aimed at parents choosing a trade for their child or at young men about to enter an apprenticeship: Samuel Richardson (1734) derived the apprentice's obligations contractually - from the covenants contained in the Indentures that were signed on entering service, but he urged young men "to *conclude* the *Boy*, and *begin* the *Man* … to confirm and strengthen your good Habits; and to improve that Learning and those sound Morals, which your Friends, with so much Care and Expence, have Inculcated".[421] John Barnard's advice (1739) was ostensibly written for his son entering an apprenticeship and he founded his advice 'both Moral and Oeconomick' on "right Reason … conducive to a virtuous and happy life".[422] Robert Campbell (1747) provided comprehensive advice aimed at parents choosing a suitable trade for their offspring; he stressed the weighty trust that parents held in securing the welfare of their son by selecting a trade suitable to his genius, talents and constitution but he also reminded them of the significance of their choice for the wider society since "the Strength of the Commonwealth does not so much consist in the Number of its Subjects, as in the Number of People properly employed".[423]

This new emphasis on a moral agenda and the growing interest in self-reflection and self-improvement introduced discourses of obligation that were driven by personal conscience, with its intimations that failure to comply was likely to stimulate a sense of guilt.[424] It was one of three types of obligation that can be seen to operate in the early eighteenth century.

Varieties of obligation

Those familiar with eighteenth-century writing are well used to its frequent allusions to dutiful behaviour, both compliance (the expectation that one will act in accordance with accepted moral and social codes), and complaisance, the willingness to please. Whilst these themes formed the plots of comic and tragic writing and were the backbone of religious and advice literature, they also appeared naturally and frequently in discussions about conduct, relationships or social interaction. The variety of such forms is at first sight bewildering but, by analysing and codifying their various

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[421] Samuel Richardson, 'The Apprentice's Vade Mecum', in *Early Works*, ed. by Alexander Pettit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 27.
[422] (attrib.) Dedication, Barnard, *Present for an Apprentice*.
[423] Campbell, *London Tradesman*, pp. 1–14.
[424] The new tendency towards self-reflection was discussed in Chapter 3. For the growing emphasis on self-improvement see, for instance, James Raven, 'New Reading Histories, Print Culture and the Identification of Change: The Case of Eighteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 23.3 (1998), 268–87; and Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England*, *The Invention of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 170–75.

forms, we can bring into sharper relief some of the concerns that occupied eighteenth-century minds. Perhaps the most useful categorisation of obligation for our purposes is one we have already met - the division into those things we *must* do where we can expect to be punished for non-compliance, those we *ought* to do where we will feel guilty if we do not follow our consciences, and those we *could* do, acts that might engender in us a warm sense of virtue.

This simple categorisation reflects the principal ways that moral obligation is often discussed by modern philosophers. Whilst ethical theorists can adopt different philosophical positions depending on their analytical stances, discussion generally falls into one of three modes of thought, the *axiological* (those things that are inherently good and therefore we must do), the *deontic* (actions we feel duty-bound to take, that we should or ought to do) and the *supererogatory* (those additional acts of kindness we could or might choose to do). These three modes represent very different approaches to moral philosophy and, within philosophical debate, can prove problematic, particularly when exploring the boundaries between axiological and deontic positions.[425] However, for an historian, these categories can provide a useful typology for examining the distinct types of debate very common in the eighteenth century. We will consider each in turn, using them merely as broad categories and without too much concern for the elisions and overlaps that can occur between axiological and deontic behaviours. Once we have considered the moral dimensions of *obliged* behaviour (both axiological and deontic) we will turn to the other important category of eighteenth-century usage, *obliging* behaviour (supererogation), those complaisant acts whose discussion made such a significant impact on the frequency with which the language of obligation was deployed in the period.

Submitting to the 'must'

Axiological approaches appeal to the Good and involve consideration of the higher duties demanded of us - those actions that are obligatory to do and which are often expressed as requirements set out in law, rules or customs. Axiological obligation therefore refers to normative standards where failures to comply might be condemned.[426] They are essentially predetermined either by our core values (religious or otherwise) or those of the society to which we belong and are often represented by the promises we make variously by formal contract or handshake, in

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[425] For examples of the debate, see Lawrence C. Becker, 'Axiology, Deontology, and Agent Morality: The Need for Coordination', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 6.3 (1972), 213–20; and Christine Tappolet, 'The Normativity of Evaluative Concepts', in *Mind, Values, and Metaphysics. Philosophical Essays in Honor of Kevin Mulligan, Volume 1*, ed. by Anne Reboul (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), pp. 39–54.

[426] Samuel L. Hart, 'Axiology - Theory of Values', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 32.1 (1971), 29–41; Becker, 'Axiology, Deontology, and Agent Morality'.

prayers, in a marriage ceremony or simply by compliance with society's laws and well-established customs. Early eighteenth-century attitudes towards such topics as financial obligation, honourable conduct, and religion were often expressed in axiological terms and there was much philosophical debate centred around the extent to which our natural instincts require us to act in a morally correct manner.[427] As we saw in Chapter 2, this axiological sense of obligation showed little change in frequency into the eighteenth century although its emphasis shifted with, for example, movement away from religious necessity towards private conscience. However, at a personal level such obligatory duties were essentially unproblematic in that individuals either accepted them or found ways to circumvent them - Defoe's Moll Flanders was fully aware that she crossed a line when she robbed, committed fraud, or married bigamously but there was little moral dilemma, she merely weighed her exposure to risk. Yet there were also moral boundaries she would not cross, for example in maintaining a lasting commitment to her son born of a fleeting affair and placed with an adoptive mother.

Whilst issues of considerable historical interest are raised by these shifts in values, for example, concerning attitudes to the law governing debt or the movement to reinstate traditional moral values, they did not impact on the increased frequency of references to obligation which are the central concern of this thesis, and we will therefore focus our attention on those other senses of obligation which broke new ground and contributed to the increase in debate about obligation.[428]

Confronting the 'ought'

Deontic ethics are concerned with what it is 'right' to do on moral or affective grounds, and deontic forms of obligation deal directly with the *ought*, examples being the sense of duty one might feel in supporting one's offspring or helping a stranger who is taken ill. Such obligations, if unmet, can generate either personal feelings of guilt or external criticism and there is therefore a significant affective element.[429] Eighteenth-century debate often dwelt on the role of the passions in governing moral decision-making, both positively as the rationale for good behaviour and negatively as an unruly human condition in need of self-control. More generally, feelings were a

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[427] Explored, for example, by Stephen Darwall in his *Internal Ought*, pp. 1–22.

[428] For discussion of debt, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Julian Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For Moral reformation, see Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*; Craig, 'Reformation of Manners'; and Andrew, *Conscience and Its Critics*.

[429] Millard Schumaker, 'Deontic Morality and the Problem of Supererogation', *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 23.6 (1972), 427–28; R. Jay Wallace, 'The Deontic Structure of Morality', in *Thinking About Reasons: Themes from the Philosophy of Jonathan Dancy*, ed. by David Bakhurst, Margaret Olivia Little, and Brad Hooker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 137–67.

significant feature of the period's literature, with writers regularly employing such passions as obligation, honour, love or envy as their key themes.[430]

As we saw in Chapter 1, Charlotte Lennox relied heavily on obligation in her *Female Quixote* (1752), and her later novels considered other sentimental themes in which emotions played a substantial role. In *Henrietta* (1758), we see a woman of integrity but little money trying to make her way in the world whilst *Sophia* (1762) juxtaposes moral rectitude with frivolity and status-seeking. Lennox was very aware of contemporary debates about the desirability of controlling the passions and she criticised Francis Hutcheson's *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1742) for his careful selection of easy examples to exemplify virtuous decision-making. Her poem *On reading Hutchison on the Passions* (1747) directly criticised him for offering a "soft Philosophy addrest/ To the untroubled Ear and tranquil Breast", useful only to those who "idly, rove amidst a Calm of Thought".[431] This work, she claimed, ignored the very many people who had to contend with misery and distress and therefore faced difficult moral dilemmas, the types of character she placed at the centre of her novels. In a later version of the poem (1752) Lennox added a second stanza which addressed these concerns even more directly, seeking better guidance on how the virtuous should resist temptations:

> My fervent soul a nobler art requires,
> Not to suppress, but regulate her fires:
> Some better guides, who temperately wise
> Allow to feel, yet teach us to despise.
> To Reason's sway subject the Soul's domain,
> And not subdue the passions, but restrain.[432]

This challenge, *not to subdue the passions, but restrain*, ran through much writing in the first half of the eighteenth century. Many writers of advisory and other literature urged their readers to adopt dutiful behaviours whether in family life, the conduct of business or with financial responsibilities. There was usually a practical tenor to their writing, emphasising conduct rather than thought, echoing Daniel Defoe's desire not "to know their duty, as to practise it", and his various conduct handbooks set a practical moral tone for later authors, such as the Ipswich cleric Benjamin Frost whose *Discourses Upon the Office of Godfathers and Godmothers* (1741) described in some detail their duties, always guided by an obligation to "engage themselves to do what they are able, that the Children brought by them to be baptiz'd, shall be instructed and trained up like

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[430] See, for example, Norman S. Fiering, 'Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37.2 (1976), 195 (p. 195).

[431] Charlotte Lennox, *Poems on Several Occasions. Written by a Young Lady* (London: S. Paterson, 1747), p. 37.

[432] In *Charlotte Lennox: Correspondence and Miscellaneous Documents*, ed. by Norbert Schürer (Lanham, Md: Bucknell University Press, 2012), p. 40.

Persons dedicated to Christ Jesus". He stressed that this was not some generalised promise but a practical duty to engage with all aspects of the child's religious life.[433] This trend towards practical morality can be further illustrated by examples drawn from family life and financial duty.

Domestic obligation

 The blueprint for educational writing was set by John Locke's *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), reprinted and quoted frequently across the eighteenth century. His essay provided much practical advice on bringing up children and covered such topics as health, diet, play and discipline, but his fundamental thesis concerned the centrality of a virtuous education in personal formation. He argued that "It is virtue then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education … All other considerations and accomplishments should give way, and be postponed, to this".[434] However, by mid-century, the practical often overtook the moral in educational advice, and the emphasis was increasingly on control of the emotions (*pace* the dispute between Hutcheson and Lennox).

Joseph Collyer (1761) had little time for moral education and stressed a dual role in educating a child - to train him for the works and business of manhood and to be a useful, worthy and amiable member of the community. He advocated a firm upbringing in which the child's mind should not be softened by endearments but schooled in controlling the passions although he also emphasised the need to encourage a love for the nation and the happiness of the whole human race: "These dispositions, if deeply rooted in the mind of the child, will have an effect on his whole conduct, and contribute both to his happiness and that of the community".[435] We will return to this new emphasis on obligation towards society later in the chapter.

The sacred nature of matrimony continued to be stressed. In addition to Defoe, Richard Allestree's *The Gentleman's Calling* and *The Ladies' Calling* were much read (published in 1660 and 1673 respectively but republished and quoted across the eighteenth century).[436] However, most writers were concerned to promote matrimonial harmony, whether or not in conformity with religious principles. Defoe argued, "The great Duty between the Man and his Wife, I take to consist in that of Love, in the Government of Affection, and the Obedience of a complaisant, kind, obliging

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[433] Benjamin Frost, *The Substance of Two Discourses Upon the Office of Godfathers and Godmothers* (Ipswich: W. Craighton, 1741), pp. 11, 13 et seq.

[434] John Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education', in *The Works of John Locke, in Nine Volumes.*, 9 vols (London: Printed for C. and J. Rivington [etc.], 1824), VIII, p. 38.

[435] Joseph Collyer, *The Parent's and Guardian's Directory, and the Youth's Guide, in the Choice of a Profession Or Trade* (R. Griffiths, 1761), pp. 1–12.

[436] Richard Allestree, *The Gentleman's Calling* (London: T.Garthwait, 1660); *The Ladies Calling* (Oxford: The Theater, 1673).

Temper; the Obligation is reciprocal, 'tis drawing in an equal Yoke".[437] Mary Astell recognised marriage as "the Institution of Heaven" but she blamed unhappy marriages on its participants, "Man may be very happy in a Married State; 'tis his own fault if he is at any time otherwise".[438]

As in other periods, matrimony was of enduring interest in the early eighteenth century, and many sought advice. The innovative journal *The Athenian Mercury* (1691-97), printed answers to readers' questions on a variety of topics ranging from the factual (*eg, was St Paul married?*) to the practical (*is there a cure for stammering?*) via the metaphysical (*What is death?*).[439] A very large number of its questions concerned marriage, mentioned over 800 times compared with less than 200 questions concerning money. Some were technical, concerning for example consanguinity or the marriage vows, but correspondents more frequently sought personal advice about, for instance, choice of marriage partner, coping with a loveless marriage or maintaining heterosexual friendships once married. The answers usually stressed the importance of companionate marriage, and this was also seen in other works, with Defoe commenting "Marriage without Love, is the compleatest Misery in Life",[440] and Mary Astell advising, "He who does not make Friendship the chief inducement to his Choice [of marriage partner], and prefer it before any other consideration, does not deserve a good Wife".[441]

This theme of companionate marriage and shared obligations was reflected in both advice literature and fiction, although the latter tended to focus on its breakdown. Eliza Haywood's novels made full use of the dangers and pitfalls present in marriage, and they rehearsed what can go wrong if either husband or wife behaves badly. She later used the collective experiences of her characters to create a pair of companion publications *The Wife* and *The Husband* (1756) which provided advice for a happy marriage. She stressed that both husbands and wives had obligations to maintain a harmonious relationship and to scotch disputes at the first opportunity, "The least disagreement between two persons, who ought to be actuated but by one soul, should be check'd in its very beginning" - it was important to maintain honesty, sincerity and truth between husband and wife to lend dignity, love, friendship and devotion to the marriage.[442]

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[437] Daniel Defoe, *A Treatise Concerning the Use and Abuse of the Marriage Bed: Shewing the Nature of Matrimony, Its Sacred Original, and the True Meaning of Its Institution …* (London: T. Warner, 1727), p. 26.

[438] Defoe, *Religious Courtship*; *Marriage Bed*; Mary Astell, *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, 3rd edn (London: R. Wilkin, 1706).

[439] Published collectively in three volumes in 1703-4. John Dunton and et al, *The Athenian Oracle: Being an Entire Collection of All the Valuable Questions and Answers in the Old Athenian Mercuries*, 3 vols (London: J. Knapton and others, 1703).

[440] Defoe, *Marriage Bed*, p. 102.

[441] Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage*, p. 9.

[442] Eliza Haywood, *The Wife* (London: T. Gardner, 1756); *The Husband: In Answer to The Wife* (London: T. Gardner, 1756).

Debate about matrimony thus focused on both the roles and obligations of marriage partners and these discourses extended into discussion about family life and the conduct of the home. We have already noted expectations on parents in raising their children, and similar attitudes were encouraged towards apprentices and servants. Naomi Tadmor has explored how family responsibility was extended towards all who shared a roof, including servants.[443] Daniel Defoe set out this obligation explicitly in 1715, "apprentices taken into our houses ought, as far as respects their souls, to be reckoned as children; for as we take them from the tuition of their parents, if we act not the parent to them as well as the master, we may teach them their trade, but we breed them up for the Devil".[444] Other didactic writers also described the master's obligations. Patrick Delany (1744) set out in some detail the five obligations that masters owed their servants: to do justice to their servants by avoiding making unreasonable demands and in paying them an honest wage, to correct their faults, not with deliberate cruelty but with a temperate degree of just and reasonable treatment, to set a good example by honesty and conscience in all their dealings, to provide both the means and the leisure to understand and perform their duty to God, and finally to encourage them in well-doing, because "applause and encouragement have more influence upon us, than correction and punishment".[445] He expected such obligation to extend beyond their time in service and urged masters to remember faithful servants in their wills and to make provision for them in their old age.

Financial obligations

Early century changes in both finance and trade impacted on many lives. Developments in banking and new financial instruments provided opportunities to invest in business ventures even for those with modest surplus funds, and John Brewer estimates that, by 1756, around 60,000 people (1% of the population) held stock in public funds, with many more investing in private enterprises.[446] Peter Earle found that, in a sample of London men of varying fortunes who died leaving orphans, over a third of their assets were held in investments (mainly property).[447] New business opportunities were also encouraged through a lively trade in manufactured or imported goods fuelled by a growing consumer economy and surplus earnings.[448] Craig Meldrew has shown that this boom was hampered by shortages of coinage, problems of cash flow or a simple

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[443] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp. 21–24.
[444] Defoe, *The Family Instructor*, p. 195.
[445] Patrick Delany, *Fifteen Sermons Upon Social Duties: By the Author of the Life of David* (London: J. Rivington, 1744), pp. 207–37.
[446] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 102.
[447] Earle, *Making of the Middle Class*, p. 143.
[448] Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, pp. 25–42.

expectation that bills could be paid later rather than sooner.[449] This caused very frequent problems, with most traders and artisans owing and being owed money (often in equal measure) so that any single demand for payment could easily cause serious financial problems. The opportunities to make or lose a fortune were many and this added to the precariousness of life for the small trader or artisan, where competition, a failure in supply, over-extended credit, default on debt, or illness could easily cause a thriving business to fail, reducing his family into poverty.[450] In such an atmosphere, discussion of trust, honour, credit and obligation was commonplace.

Daniel Defoe was acutely aware of both the vagaries of business and the personal costs of bankruptcy, having made and lost money on various enterprises and spending time in both the Fleet and King's Bench prisons; and this concern was reflected in his fictional and didactic works.[451] His heroes and heroines frequently worried about financial security whilst his advice to tradesmen devoted considerable attention to the management of money, credit and the dangers of debt. He urged creditors to be understanding of the debts of others and counselled against pursuing debt through the courts:

> GOING to Law for a Debt, tho' the Debt be just, before all due and Christian Measures are made use of to obtain Right by fair Means, that is, by peaceable Methods, is taking your Neighbour by the Throat, &c. a Thing, tho' not expresly forbidden, yet left as an Example of ungrateful Fury and Rage, and a Mark of Infamy left on it, as a Brand of Heaven's Dislike … WHEN oblig'd by Necessity to use Violence, that is to say, the Violence of a legal Prosecution, yet to do it with Civility, with Tenderness, without exposing the Debtor more than needs.[452]

Samuel Johnson, himself twice arrested for debt, railed against the system of debtors' prisons. He devoted an edition of the Idler to condemnation of those creditors who pursued the imprisonment of their debtors and another edition to promoting debt law reform to avoid the wastefulness of human life represented by debtors' prisons.[453]

It is worth noting that terms which, in modern usage, are almost exclusively used in financial contexts such as *credit*, *riches*, *prosperity*, *wealth* and *profit* held additional significance in the eighteenth century when they operated within two distinct semantic fields: one addressing financial questions and the other relating to social value or self-worth. *Riches* was associated mainly with financial meanings, but *profit* and *wealth* were broadly balanced between implications of social and financial advantage. However, *credit* and *prosperity* took predominantly social meanings

[449] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 180–82.
[450] For a discussion of the mechanics of business finance, see Hoppit, *Risk and Failure*; Earle, *Making of the Middle Class*, pp. 106–30.
[451] Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 63–67.
[452] Defoe, *English Tradesman*, pp. 129, 143.
[453] The Idler No. 22 (September 1758) & No. 38 (January 1759), Samuel Johnson, *The Major Works*, ed. by Donald Greene, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 285–90.

emphasising status, self-respect and the respect of others.[454] For example, Edward Phillips (1700) defined credit as "Trust, belief: Also that esteem which a Man acquires in publick by his Vertue, his Probity, his Honesty, and his Merit" whilst prosperity was "the condition of him who has all things according to his hearts desire, who succeeds in all his undertakings".[455] Whilst most terms reflecting social or personal values showed increase in frequency of use as the century progressed, features of life that made it worth living (*happiness, welfare, tranquillity, safety, etc*) disproportionately increased by 36% compared to a more modest increase for meanings associated with riches (just 9%).[456]

So far, we have considered what people felt they were required to do either by external precept (the *must*) or by internal forces (the *ought*). Such senses of duty were extensively discussed in the first half of the century and saw shifts in emphasis in, for example, the move away from the axiological towards the deontic and from external control to internal conscience. However, many aspects of what has been described for the eighteenth century could also, in suitably modified form, have been said of the seventeenth century - a continuing sense of duty that pervaded discussion of relationships. What was distinctively different about the eighteenth century was its focus on a new form of *public* conduct and conscience which accounts for much of the growth in references to obligation, which we will now consider.

Socialising the 'could'

These new discourses emphasised regard for those outside one's immediate sphere of responsibility for whom a strong sense of obligation would be inappropriate. As the opportunities for social interaction grew, so the outward signs of complaisance, generosity, being obliging or showing indebtedness towards those who have been obliging to you became increasingly useful tools in projecting acceptable sociable behaviour.[457] Such displays of considerate behaviour or kindness to others reflect a form of obligation that philosophers term supererogation, covering the sphere of human decision-making that stands outside the strictly ethical - obliging rather than

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[454] Data derived from word vector analysis of the ECCO-TCP corpus in an unpublished paper, Maurice Brenner, 'A Question of Periodicity: Changing Attitudes to Esteem and Credit over the Course of the Eighteenth Century' (unpublished Working Paper, University of Suffolk, 2017).

[455] Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words*, seventh edition (London, 1720).

[456] This finding provides a gloss on the work of economic historians who have argued for the role played by dutiful honour and credit in an economy based on credit and contract. See, for example, Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 315–33; Finn, *Character of Credit*, pp. 25–63; John Smail, 'Credit, Risk, and Honor in Eighteenth-Century Commerce', *The Journal of British Studies*, 44.03 (2005), 439–56.

[457] For a comprehensive overview of eighteenth-century sociability, see the collection of essays *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. by Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019).

obligatory acts. These go beyond the call of duty and are morally good, but not mandatory in nature, "good to do but not bad not to do".[458] For example, a positive act such as giving a coin to a beggar in the street might momentarily make one feel good and could even meet with the fleeting approval of others, but failure to do so is unlikely to give oneself or others a moment's disapproving thought. Eighteenth-century accounts often mentioned acts of casual kindness towards kin, neighbours and the less fortunate, and insufficient attention has been given to the cultural and social drivers behind such conduct. As Tim Hitchcock has noted, begging was both illegal and commonplace whilst almsgiving formed part of the daily routine of many.[459] We will look in detail at the charity-giving practice of Thomas Turner in the next chapter, but in this chapter we consider the discourses that surrounded such acts. This is a large topic warranting separate and extended treatment so this section can serve only as an overview. We will start however with a consideration of those small gestures of goodwill which oiled the wheels of eighteenth-century society, the obliging gestures which were termed manners.

Manners

In modernity *manners* usually holds a relatively neutral stance in describing either an individual's superficially correct or incorrect social behaviours or, more widely, the customary rules of behaviour expected within a particular group or society. However, in eighteenth-century usage *manners* could be a far more pregnant term, often used to describe either the effort required to make others feel easy or as a reference to a person's inner being, the extent to which their conduct and ethics met the required standards of private or public behaviour. It could effectively become a shorthand for popular ethics and, by extension, might even apply to society as a whole, as in the debates about the need for a reformation of manners that we met earlier. This distinction was emphasised by Thomas Hobbes (1651) who distinguished between the 'small morals' of courteous behaviour and the higher moral life:

> BY MANNERS, I mean not here, decency of behaviour; as how one should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth, or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of

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[458] Roderick M. Chisholm, 'Supererogation and Offence: A Conceptual Scheme for Ethics (1963)', in *Brentano and Meinong Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982); For a discussion of supererogation and its problematic nature see David Heyd, 'Supererogation', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Stanford: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2012).

[459] Tim Hitchcock, 'Begging on the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 44.3 (2005), 478–98. Lynn Hollen Lees has provided a rich account of communal responsibilities for the poor in *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Deborah Valenze has chronicled changing attitudes in the late century, 'Charity, Custom and Humanity: Changing Attitudes towards the Poor in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh*, ed. by John Walsh, Jane Garnett, and Colin Matthew (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 59–78.

the small morals; but those qualities of mankind, that concern their living together in peace, and unity.[460]

The interplay between these two meanings of manners as both social and ethical behaviour was a theme emphasised by several writers, with Jonathan Swift referring in 1710 to "Those inferior duties of life, which the French call *les petites morales*, or the smaller morals, are, with us, distinguished by the name of good manners, or breeding … introduced to make mankind easy in their commerce with each other". He described a visit to the country residence of some good people who, in their wish to be simultaneously kind and well-mannered, suffocated him with food, drink and attention, proceeding not from "an ill intention, but from a wrong judgment of complaisance, and a misapplication of the rules of it".[461] The growth of sociable activity and mobility brought increasing interaction between people from differing backgrounds and experiences so that it became easier to give unintentional offence, and good social behaviour came to be considered an obligation. As Elizabeth Haywood noted in *The Female Spectator* (*circa* 1745), "Good Manners is a Debt we owe to ourselves as well as to others, and whoever neglects to pay it forfeits all the Pretensions he might otherwise have both to the Love and Respect of the World".[462]

Manners and good breeding were also associated with another term in moderate use in the eighteenth century, that of politeness. According to Philip Carter, the period

"saw the emergence of an explicitly innovative concept of social refinement - politeness practised by and within 'polite society', by which is meant the personnel who sought politeness and the locations … where refined conduct was expected and encouraged". [463]

Paul Langford attributes politeness to two new modes of thought typified by a '*Spectator* mode' which sought to "mirror and to mould contemporary manners" and a 'Shaftesbury mode' which entailed "notions of virtue and taste that challenged the assumptions of an older intellectual order".[464] Yet as was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1 references to politeness were sparse in eighteenth-century writing, particularly in the first half of the century. Whilst a few intellectuals and 'opinion-formers' may have written in the vein suggested by Carter and Langford, they did not appear to represent the bulk of writing or reported conversation where references to politeness focused mainly on individuals and their conduct. These mentions of polite conduct usually emphasised the obligation to behave in a good, seemly or kindly manner without any suggestion of a wish to innovate or challenge the old order. If there was challenge, its targets were

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[460] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 69.
[461] The Tatler XX, Jonathan Swift, *Miscellaneous Essays*, ed. by Sir Walter Scott (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, 1824), p. 65.
[462] Eliza Haywood, *The Female Spectator (1744-46)*, 4 vols (A. Millar, W. Law, & R. Cater, 1775), II, p. 71.
[463] Carter, *Polite Society*, p. 1.
[464] Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', p. 312.

impolite or inappropriate conduct, a regular theme in the pages of *The Spectator* journal (1711-12) where, for example, a favourite topic was the supposed roughness and unmannered ways of the countryside in comparison with those of the Town. One fictitious correspondent wrote to ask for advice in tutoring a young country kinswoman lately come to Town, "She is very pretty, but you can't imagine how unformed a Creature it is. She comes to my Hands just as Nature left her, half-finished, and without any acquired Improvements". Another correspondent mocked the dress found in the countryside, "we fancied our selves in King Charles the Second's Reign, the People having made very little Variations in their Dress since that time. The Smartest of the Country Squires appear still in the Monmouth Cock [a hat style popular in the late seventeenth century]".[465] In such examples, *politeness* seems to have operated as a category of *manners*.

The dual concepts of manners as ethic and conduct came together in that quintessentially eighteenth-century conception of behaviour, *complaisance* - the wish to please others, to serve and be served, to oblige and be obliged.[466]

Complaisance

An important aspect of eighteenth-century manners was attention not only to the forms of social interaction but the spirit in which they were conducted, captured by the notion of complaisance which could be applied to one's dealings with others, from mere acquaintances to intimate relationships. We have already met Eliza Haywood's pair of books advising husbands and wives in the difficult matter of the conduct of their marriage and her advice was couched in the language of complaisance to which she devoted a complete section in *The Wife*, describing "how far it will be extended by the Tenderness and Duty of a good Wife towards her Husband".[467] Her admonition to please each other provided not only a good basis for marriage but also a way to manage one another by encouraging good qualities and dampening poor ones, as her advice to husbands made explicit:

> tenderness and complaisance will make a generous, and good-natur'd woman endeavour to
> improve herself in all those qualities which merit such a treatment; and may possibly work on
> one who is morose and uncomplying to become more flexible and obliging.[468]

These sentiments were echoed by John Barnard in his advice to apprentices when he urged men to continue to show towards their wives after marriage "the same Tenderness in your Eyes, the same

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465 Quotations taken from *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, Reissued (Oxford: Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2015), sec. May 16, 1711 Vol I, 239 (Steele), July 28 1711 Vol II 14 (Addison).
466 The term was rarely used before the 1690s or after the 1860s and reach peak usage in the 1750s, 'Google Books Ngram Viewer', 2020 <https://books.google.com/ngrams/> [accessed 12 May 2021], (complaisant/ce, 1650-1950).
467 Haywood, *The Wife*, pp. 156–60.
468 Haywood, *The Husband*, p. 8.

obliging Turn in your Behaviour, and give her daily and hourly Proof, if possible, that she is as dear to you as ever".[469] Joseph Addison set great store by complaisance, devoting a complete edition of *The Guardian* to it, defined in the following terms:

> COMPLAISANCE renders a Superior amiable, an Equal agreeable, and an Inferior acceptable. It smooths Distinction, sweetens Conversation, and makes every one in the Company pleased with himself. It produces Good-nature and mutual Benevolence, encourages the Timorous, sooths the Turbulent, humanizes the Fierce, and distinguishes a Society of civilized Persons from a Confusion of Savages. In a Word, COMPLAISANCE is a Virtue that blends all Orders of Men together in a friendly Intercourse of Words and Actions, and is suited to that Equality of Human Nature which every one ought to consider, so far as is consistent with the Order and Oeconomy of the World.[470]

Whilst complaisance, the inclination to be pleasant to others, was a relatively mild virtue there were also more muscular discourses at play promoting compassionate love of others, and the obligation to benevolence, generosity or kindness.

Philanthropy

These three notions of compassion could be used interchangeably but they also had different emphases which we will consider in turn. *Benevolence* usually represented a general moral stance, a universal regard for others, as explained in the 1756 edition of Nathan Bailey's Dictionary:

> Beneficence is the highest and most illustrious strain of humanity, when a man out of a pure inclination, that arises either from a native generosity of soul or from pity and compassion to person in distress, is at some pains or charge in bestowing freely upon another what may relieve his necessity or promote his advantage.[471]

Benevolence was a popular subject for essay writers.[472] Within the space of 14 months in 1713-14, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele allocated three journal articles to the topic (one in *The Guardian* and two in *The Spectator*) as well as discussing benevolence *en passant* within multiple other articles, and *The London Magazine* devoted two articles to benevolence in the space of eight months in 1733.[473] Such pieces appear to have been heavily influenced by the Earl of Shaftesbury's conception of man as a virtuous being made for society, explicitly so in *The London Magazine* which published an article (1732) *In vindication of Lord Shaftesbury* which defended his stance on virtue.[474]

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[469] Barnard, *Present for an Apprentice*, pp. 71–72.

[470] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Guardian, with Notes, and a General Index, Complete in One Volume* (Philadelphia: M. Wallis Woodward & Co., 1835), pp. 527–29 No. 162 Wednesday, September 16, 1713.

[471] Nathan Bailey, *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary ...*, fourth edition (London: T. Waller, 1756), II.

[472] RW Babcock lists over 50 treatments in his 'Benevolence, Sensibility and Sentiment in Some Eighteenth-Century Periodicals', *Modern Language Notes*, 62.6 (1947), 394–97.

[473] Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, p. 227: 170, September 25, 1713; Bond, *The Spectator*, pp. 44, 229: 10, September 1, 1714 & 54, October 1, 1714; Isaac Kimber, *London Magazine: Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer (1732)* (London: C. Ackers, 1732): 236, August 1732, & 192, April 1733.

[474] Kimber, *London Magazine 1732*, p. 135.

In comparison, *generosity* was often construed as a more personal characteristic, a laudable tendency in an individual to take positive action to help others. It was popular as a title for poetry, novels, tunes and, particularly, on the stage. For example, the start of the century saw published *The Generous Choice* (Francis Manning, comedy, 1700), *The Generous Lovers* (William Philips, comedy, 1700), *The Generous Portuguese* (Peter Motteux, opera, 1701), *The Generous Conquerour* (Bevil Higgons, tragedy, 1702) and *The Generous Refusal* (Anon, published but unperformed, 1704). Whilst generosity was seen as wholly good, it was not simply equated to liberality with money - this was often condemned, for example by Abel Boyer, commenting, "Liberality is oftentimes nothing else but the Vanity of Giving, of which we are more fond than the Things we give".[475] Like benevolence, generosity was seen as something noble, "above even Justice and Charity", but it had to be executed with discretion "without ostentation, and without ever debasing it by that insulting kind of Compassion, which strikes a dagger into the breast of those who are obliged, and forces them to blush at the assistance they receive". [476]

Kindness tended to reference more quotidian acts, temporary in nature but nonetheless indicating supportive behaviour. It also frequently appeared in titles of works - particularly sermons concerning God's goodness but also in popular songs with a more light-hearted theme, either bucolic or suggestive of amorous rather than financial favours, such as *The butcher's kindness to the taylor's wife* and *The thankful country lass, or, The jolly batchelor kindly entertained*. The term very commonly acknowledged obliging behaviour and was freely used in correspondence, as in Jonathan Swift's letter to Esther Johnson ("Stella"), "Mr. Harley [...] received me with the greatest respect and kindness", frequently indicating the sense of a service done for which thankfulness was a suitable response.[477] Such indications of gratitude were the counterparts to generous behaviour, indicating the obligation that followed from an obliging act.

The ultimate displays of social benevolence were acts of charity. Support for the poor had a long tradition and eighteenth-century writers continued to urge charitable activity as a virtue central to the Christian life; for example, the ESTC lists 701 eighteenth-century works that contained both *sermon* and *charity* in their title. In more general usage *charity* could refer to tolerance (*eg* "we must forgive and we must be charitable"), kindness ("Your Letters are a perfect charity to a man in retirement"), general benevolence ("she feels A Charity which in its Nature shews Heaven

[475] Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus or, the Manners of the Age...* (London, 1702), p. 260.

[476] Whitelocke Bulstrode, *Essays Upon the Following Subjects: ...* (London: A Bettesworth, 1724), pp. 1–2; Anon, *Thelamont; or, Perfect Generosity. A Novel. By the Editor of Clidanor and Cecilia* (London: M. Cooper, 1744), pp. 1–3.

[477] Jonathan Swift, *The Prose Works Of Jonathan Swift Vol II: The Journal To Stella*, ed. by Frederick Ryland (London: George Bell, 1908), p. Sept 30 1710, 21.

for its Birthplace"), or specific acts of generosity. Since Edward Thompson's seminal essay, many historians have explored a moral economy in which the poor expected support, as of right, from the more fortunate.[478] However, such a perspective is rarely found in eighteenth-century published writing, which was in the main written by and for the middling and better sorts. Here, obligation to charity was portrayed (if at all) as an obligation to God rather than to the poor although most references did not see charity as an obligation at all, choosing to express it in supererogatory terms as a choice driven either by virtue or as an obliging act of kindness. For example, Edward Colston used his great wealth from the slave trade to endow many charities - the tributes on his death marked him as someone whose charity greatly exceeded "his assessed Share to the Poor" and who laid out his "Substances, and Diligence" to do "great and noble Things for the common Welfare and Grandeur" displaying "a publick Spirit, and a great Soul", his acts being seen as borne of generosity rather than duty.[479]

Another form of benevolence also began to emerge from the early eighteenth century which extended beyond helping individuals or specific groups, and now emphasised the collective good. One of the earliest writers in this mode was Daniel Defoe whose first foray into publishing was his *Essay on Projects* (1697). At this time projectors commonly proposed various schemes ('projects') either to improve commerce or, more frequently, as money-making enterprises, but Defoe recast this debate by emphasising a new role for the state or groups of well-meaning citizens, and he suggested a series of projects which emphasised "neighbours fare" - that connectivity between people which binds their fate to those of others.[480] He proposed, variously, tax and bankruptcy law reform to protect small businesses, a form of national assistance to help the incapacitated and aged, and a network of friendly societies and institutions for the mentally unsound to be funded by a tax on learning, all of which had the aim of reducing the burden on the poor, the sick and the unfortunate.[481] As the century progressed projects of this nature became the target for increasing attention from benefactors. Donna Andrew, for example, notes the substantial growth in maternity hospitals and charities between 1740 and 1760, the most illustrious being Thomas Coram's

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[478] E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 50, 1971, 76–136. For examples of the expectations by the poor of charitable help, see *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837*, ed. by Thomas Sokoll (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2001).

[479] James Harcourt, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Church of All-Saints in Bristol, October 29. 1721. upon the Death of Edward Colston, Esq* (London: R. Stansfast, 1721), Historical Texts.

[480] Daniel Defoe, *An Essay upon Projects* (London: Tho. Cockerill, 1697), Early English Books Online; Introduction, *The Age of Projects*, ed. by Maximillian E. Novak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 3; Vera Keller and Ted McCormick, 'Towards a History of Projects', *Early Science and Medicine*, 21.5 (2016), 423–44 (p. 435); Neighbour's Fare: "to partake of the experience, luck, etc., of one's neighbour, rather than creating one's own", 'Oxford English Dictionary' <https://www-oed-com.uea.idm.oclc.org/> [accessed 14 March 2023].

[481] For a helpful discussion, see Joanne Myers, 'Defoe and the Project of "Neighbors Fare"', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, 35.2 (2011).

Foundling Hospital (1740).[482] These charitable activities chime with the finding in Chapter 3 that thinkers increasingly took account of the needs of the community as a whole and the obligation of individual citizens to promote the common weal. It would therefore be useful for us to consider how conceptions of society as an entity of itself began to develop across the century.

Society

Phil Withington subjects sixteenth- and seventeenth-century uses of *society* to detailed analysis, with the first mention on the title page of a book probably being in 1576. He notes that early modern uses could encompass one's country, one's town, smaller 'private societies' such as guilds, kin, or groups of friends. Its predominant use (and that of its associated term *company*) was by incorporated bodies such as The Royal Society or The East India Company, accounting for around three-quarters of uses in the seventeenth century. Withington summarises their uses in terms of 'voluntary and purposeful association'. It was also occasionally used in more abstract senses to imply, for example, 'civil society' but these were rare (less than 2% of the examples taken from 1500-1700).[483] It is these more abstract, more inclusive, uses that demark change across the eighteenth century.

We noted in Chapter 3 how modern commentators consider that the idea of society as a political and economic entity began to emerge from the mid-eighteenth century, but that chapter also demonstrated that at least some eighteenth-century thinkers had considered society in purely communitarian terms as early as the 1710s. Shaftesbury was the first major thinker to place ethics in a social context in 1711 but a fully-fledged theory of society awaited Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)*, followed by his conception of a socialised economy in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). We now need to consider whether those intellectual developments mirrored similar changes in more ordinary discourse.

Several terms for the wider community were in general use: *the Nation, the Town, the Public, mankind, the World*, but each had multiple senses and, in the early century, they all tended to function either as merely collective expressions (for example, *public worship* or *the common opinion of mankind*) or to represent the cultured classes ("This may suffice to give the World a Taste of our innocent Conversation" or "as the Town very well knows").[484] Kathleen Wilson has discussed one particular collective term, *the people.* She demonstrates that it became a political construction

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[482] Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 4.
[483] Withington, *Society in Early Modern England*, pp. 102–33.
[484] *The Tatler*, ed. by Donald Frederic Bond, III vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), p. II 268, III 176.

towards the end of the century to represent the views of the citizenry, constituting an "invented community", lying outside formal political structures but which could be called in aid or suborned in pursuit of a political goal.[485] My own investigation of the term suggests much wider usage beyond the political domain suggestive of an entity capable of holding opinions about politics, religion, reputation or a myriad of other topics. The term was usually employed to convey the sense of an undifferentiated body with highly malleable views that might shift as circumstances altered, *the people* might hold opinions but, as an entity, it did not have the kind of permanent attributes, rights and responsibilities that *society* came to contain.

As the century progressed both the frequency and uses of such terms began to reflect shifts towards conceptions of joint enterprise, particularly in terms of the common good. For example, in constructing his remedies for the financial ills of the country, the economic writer Malachy Postlethwayt (1759) frequently expressed his arguments in terms of *Mankind* referring to its happiness and its wants, the 'good of mankind' and so on, whilst the Suffolk divine Thomas Warren preached (1740) that "the public Good is the only End of Government", and the jurist Lord Kames (1751) argued that "sympathy … is the cement of human society" and "mutual assistance is the principal end of society".[486] Whilst the sentiments of such writers were not necessarily new, their expression couched in terms of the social collective certainly was, and these shifts in the language of community can be demonstrated by exploring how the terms *society* and *public* increased in use across the century: s*ociety* becoming more frequent in the early century and increasing rapidly in the 1760s (Figure 14) whilst *public* increased in popularity two decades earlier (Figure 15) when its more traditional meanings were greatly supplemented by conceptions of community.

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[485] Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, pp. 17–21.
[486] Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great Britain's Commercial Interest Explained*, 2 vols, 1759; Thomas Warren, *The Duties of Prince and People Reciprocal. A Sermon Preach'd at St. Edmund's Bury, before the Lord Chief Justice Willes, and Mr. Justice Fortescue* (Ipswich: printed by W. Craighton, 1740); Henry Home Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, ed. by Mary Catherine Moran (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2005), pp. 21, 36.

Figure 14: Occurrences of society (per million words)
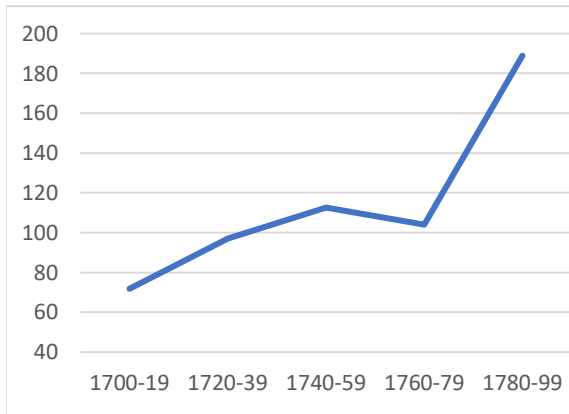
Source: ECCO-TCP 1700-1799

Figure 15: Occurrences of public/k (per million words)
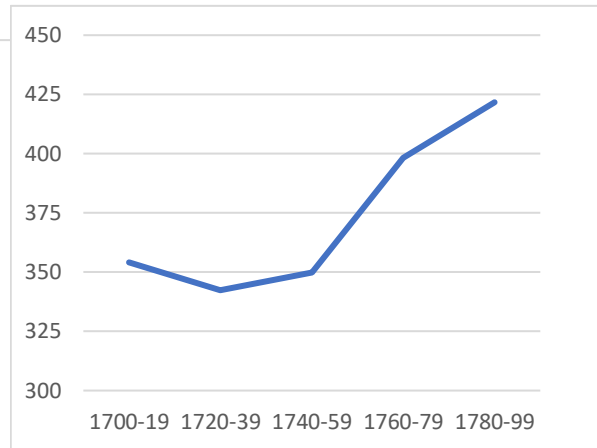
Source: ECCO-TCP 1700-1799

It is instructive to compare the changes in the way that *society* and *public* were used in documents drawn from 1700-1719 with those from 1740-1759. References to *society* were half as common in the earlier period than in the later period and those earlier usages were more likely to be general collective descriptors (eg *civil/human society* formed 18% of occurrences compared with just 5% in the late period). References to society as an entity were less common in the early century in, for example, occurrences preceded by a preposition (*of, in* or *to society*) where they formed 12% of all references but increasing to 40% in mid-century. This can be visually illustrated by mapping the number of documents containing the phrase *to society* across all texts in the full ECCO corpus in the first 6 decades of the century (Figure 16).[487]

Figure 16: texts containing the phrase *to society* held within ECCO
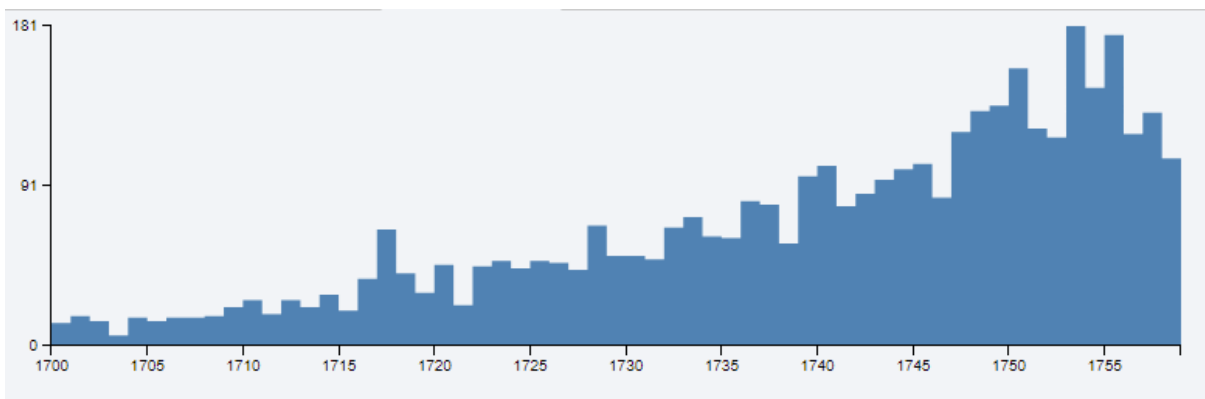
Source: JISC Historic Texts

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[487] 'JISC Historical Texts'. Mentions of 'to society' increased further in late century.

There were even more stark changes in the use of the term *public* from mid-century. In the first decades, the term implied 'not private' in such phrases as *public worship* or *public office* or as a general reference to the world at large (*eg for the use of the public*) but it was rarely used as a synonym for the community as an organised body. By the middle decades of the century, uses shifted considerably and *public* became much more commonly employed as an adjective where it described common endeavour, as in *the public advantage, affections, benefit, business, freedom, good, happiness, interest,* and so on. These changes can be illustrated by comparing the frequency of *public/publick* as an adjective, adverb and noun over the century (Figure 17).[488]

Figure 17: *public* as a noun, adjective and adverb in the Google Books Corpus
British English (2019), 1700-1800
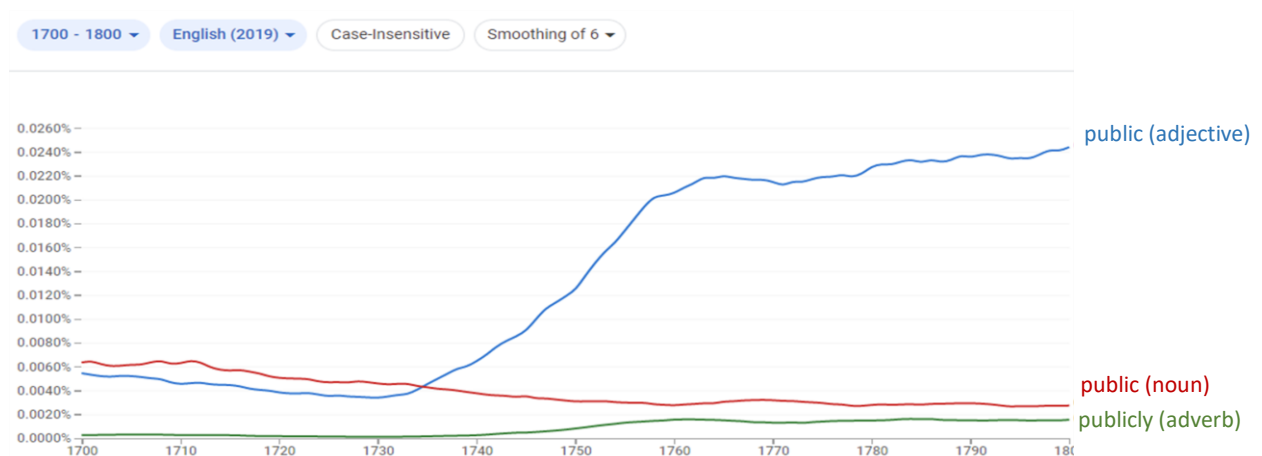
Source: Google Ngram viewer

These changing uses of *public* and *society* from the mid-eighteenth century powerfully demonstrate an increasing awareness of the collective nature of the community at large with its own standards, ethics and obligations, and this mirrors the findings of Chapter 3 that philosophical debate underwent similar change.

Conclusions

This chapter has rehearsed how some debates about obligation continued to reflect its traditional role as a marker of duty, whether as a result of external factors or as a matter of conscience. However, the language of obligation also absorbed new meanings and uses from early in the century and it became an important discursive element in all forms of writing, acting as a

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[488] The graph is derived from the Google Books Corpus which can be problematic as a research tool. However, in this case, public is a relatively common term in the corpus and this reduces the margin of error. Any potential errors are, in any case, dwarfed by the very clear trend in the graph. 'Google Books Ngram Viewer'.

shorthand which could variously reference ethical behaviour, considerate conduct, obligingness or generosity in dealing with others. We have also plotted the rise in references to communality both as a social enterprise and as a community of responsibility and obligation.

Changes in discourse do not necessarily indicate change in the way that personal relations were practically conducted in everyday life. The fact that people were discussing obligation in new ways does not automatically mean that new forms of obligation came into being, nor that they had been absent in former times. Clearly, a sense of obligation was not a feature unique to this period but what was different was the focus on obligation as an organising language with which to express moral and social ideas. To quote Quentin Skinner's dictum, "The surest sign that a group or society has entered into the self-conscious possession of a new concept is that a corresponding vocabulary will be developed, a vocabulary which can then be used to pick out and discuss the concept in question with consistency".[489] What is apparent is that the vocabularies of duty, manners and philanthropy underwent change in the eighteenth century, and the final chapter will now examine the extent to which this language manifested itself as practice.

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[489] Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1*, p. 160.

CHAPTER 6: THE PRACTICE OF OBLIGATION

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed two interlinked eighteenth-century discourses - one of obligation, effectively a debate about the limits and boundaries of personal morality and behaviour, and the other a discourse of obligingness, a call to affect in guiding and directing relationships. This chapter will focus on the impact of these discourses in everyday life, exploring how people acted out the expectations to oblige, and it will do so through the close examination of the diaries and autobiographies of five middling men recording their everyday lives in the first half of the century.[*] As in the previous chapter, we will seek out both explicit uses of the language of obligation and other evidence of obliged or obliging behaviour demonstrated through their actions and opinions.

On the evidence of contemporary writing, it would be tempting to categorise eighteenth-century life as being punctuated by countless inescapable duties, some of them timeless and others in response to the new pressures to socialise and conform to obliging practices. The intentions behind this chapter were originally to highlight how the many overarching narratives described in the last chapter played out in everyday life, and initial mining of the diaries certainly produced sufficient examples to confirm many of those narratives. The expectation was that a more detailed reading would multiply the evidence and support a picture of early eighteenth-century life as one conditioned by obliging discourses.

Whilst this approach is widely accepted in cultural studies, straightforward mining of carefully selected rich seams runs the risk of producing a distorted geology of the terrain under investigation, one that privileges only supportive evidence; and it is important therefore to cast a wider net and consider any evidence for countervailing hypotheses. A different, more thorough approach has therefore been adopted for this chapter which exploits the approach used by Naomi Tadmor in her exploration of the terms *family* and *friends* in her 2001 book.[490] This has involved capturing, for each of five diaries, every sample where the diarist commented on an interaction with others and every incident that gave him pause for thought. This has generated a database which facilitates a more comprehensive assessment of each diarist's opinions. Each sample was then coded with regard to both the topic of any implied obligation (*eg* conduct, money, religion or reputation) and

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[*] For simplicity, diaries and autobiographies are collectively termed 'diaries' in this chapter.
[490] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*.

the target of that obligation (family, friends, neighbours *etc*) with many extracts being coded for more than one topic or target.

The purpose was not to perform any statistical analysis (that would suggest dubious precision, given the methods used) but to meet two aims: to ensure that individual references were placed in their proper context and secondly to provide a firmer foundation so that qualitative judgements about any particular piece of evidence could confidently be considered as constituent rather than a mere fleeting thought by the writer. For example, a chance encounter with a 'whore' might deserve no more than a passing mention but Dudley Ryder's four encounters (and three further attempts) when considered alongside his expressions of regret place them firmly within his ethical worldview and therefore worthy of note. This approach has permitted a more comprehensive picture of the nature and reasons for each form of obligation and allowed a more objective and complete appraisal of the expressed views of the diarists.

However, this approach has confounded the initial intentions for the chapter since it has dispelled the initial clarity that the more partial investigation had brought. But, in doing so, it has revealed richer, more diverse and, at times, contradictory standpoints for our diarists. Importantly (though, perhaps, unsurprisingly) it has demonstrated that individual motivations were dependent at least as much on personal characteristics, experiences and situations as they were functions of the cultures within which the writers lived - William Stout's willingness to deal fairly with those with whom he traded reflected as much his personal and religious morality as any prevailing social attitudes toward debt. This more diverse moral landscape has introduced a sense of conditionality to the chapter which will therefore remain cautious about drawing generalisations from the specific circumstances of its principal witnesses.

General observations about diary writing

Despite the confidential nature of these five works, each written for the authors' own purposes and with little or no regard for future publication, they are not necessarily straightforward representations of the authors' considered views on any topic. Diaries are essentially of the moment, frequently written in haste and usually without subsequent amendment. A single expressed view was often a reaction to very specific circumstances rather than a considered viewpoint, and an alternative opinion might be given on another occasion in response to a different context or when the diarist was in a different mood. A single quote can therefore highly misrepresent the diarist unless both the specific circumstances of the situation and other remarks in the diary on the same topic are taken into account. Dudley Ryder's diary has a particularly confessional tone and is therefore prone to suffer at the hands of commentators. For example, one

historian has concluded that Ryder "actively sought out sex when emboldened by drink or by the lust to the fore in the night-time city", citing a single quotation of Ryder's that he "had a mind to attack a whore and did so".[491] We will consider Ryder's meetings with prostitutes later to show that these were far from simple sexual encounters and, in this case, his diary continued that he "went along with her a good way, talked with her tolerably well, and at last left her", leaving open the question of whether he actually engaged in any sexual activity.[492]

Life-writing can also be unreliable for more deep-seated reasons. Even if written only for the satisfaction of the author with no intention that others might read it, they are rarely entirely neutral documents. A diary is, in effect, a 'conversation with oneself' and, like any conversation, will take a rhetorical stance; indeed, as William Matthews has wryly observed, "most diarists pose even to themselves".[493] These works can be acts of self-fashioning - capturing not only thoughts, events and situations but also rehearsing stances, excuses or self-justifications. One of our documents, that by William Stout, is an autobiography written in old age from detailed contemporaneous records whilst another, that by John Cannon, is part autobiography and part diary. Autobiographies are more measured works written from a present-minded standpoint that evaluate and interpret past events, so the potential for self-fashioning and self-justification is therefore much greater. As Helga Schwalm has noted, "autobiography as a literary genre signifies a retrospective narrative that reconstruct[s] his/her personal development within a given historical, social and cultural framework … [I]t is inevitably constructive, or imaginative, in nature".[494] Such distortions can make these works more rather than less valuable for our current purposes since they represent the author's considered viewpoint on an event or topic, reducing the inclination for rash comment that the immediacy of the diary form tends to encourage.

Considering obligation

In addition to the normative cultural pressures discussed in the previous chapter, eighteenth-century diary writers experienced the personal burdens of obligation. Whilst they could write in very warm general terms of their obligations towards family, friends and neighbours they could also feel weighed down by them in terms both of the demands on their time and also their material impact, since the costs of supporting others could significantly affect people's ability to make their

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[491] Philip Carter, 'Faces and Crowds: Biography in the City', in *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's Trivia*, ed. by Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 32.

[492] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 71–72.

[493] Introduction, Ryder, *Diary*, p. 1.

[494] Helga Schwalm, 'Autobiography', in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. by Peter Hühn and others (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2014), pp. 14–29 (p. 14).

way in the world. The tension between the lure of affect and duty on the one hand and their negative impacts on the other will recur throughout this chapter.

Obligation was essentially a vector function - it had both a direction (the target of the obligation) and a value (the sphere of activity). In order to understand what a particular obligation meant to an individual, we have to consider both the relationship entailed and the topic involved since separating the two can be deceptive. For example, the obligations towards his ailing mother were clear to Thomas Turner, but he also had a business relationship with her as shopkeeper in a neighbouring parish, and the distinctions involved could be quite subtle. He frequently helped her in her struggles to run the family shop in nearby Framfield by carrying out many dutiful tasks on her behalf, giving freely of his time and engaging in several business activities that he would normally charge for. However, when he incurred financial costs, buying goods for her or settling her debts, he expected to be reimbursed, even if this was not always forthcoming: he noted, for example, "my mother has at this time £40 of mine on book debts which I never did ask for, no, nor hope I ever shall".[495] Despite this entanglement between the two dimensions of the vector of obligation (its relationships and its subject matter) it can be useful to explore separately each type of relationship and each type of obligation in the round, always remembering the impacts from the other dimension.

The next section will place the diarists within their context, provide an overview of their accounts and discuss the nature of the diary and its authorial voice. This will be followed by a discussion of the first of our two dimensions, the various types of obliging relationship within which the diarists operated (family, friends, neighbours and community). Finally, it will consider the second dimension, distinct areas of their lives in which obligation played an important part (religious belief, marriage, money and socialising).

The diarists and their contexts

Diary-writing[*] was a common activity in the eighteenth century. In his very comprehensive survey published in 1950, William Matthews lists 267 surviving diaries that began in the period 1700-1760. He excluded many similar forms of personal writing such as autobiographies and memoirs and, since the date of his survey, other diaries have entered the public record: in theory,

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[495] Turner, *Diary*, p. 31.

[*] The terms 'diaries', 'diarists', 'writers', 'authors' or 'witnesses' are used interchangeably to refer to the five sources referenced in this chapter.

therefore, there has been a wealth of material from which to choose.[496] However, this chapter calls for accounts by individuals from the middling sort who recounted their day-to-day experiences and also wrote with sufficient introspection to provide a window into their social and moral attitudes. The choices for this study became even more limited once elite accounts, special-interest journals and political and travel accounts were discounted. Additionally, the study required diaries of sufficient length to properly reflect their authors' intent and available in a form capable of detailed text analysis. Five diaries and autobiographies met those criteria and are summarized in Table 10, listed in the order in which they were written.

Table 10: The Diarists

Name	Type	DoB	Date written*	start date	End Date	Age when written	Location
Edmund Harrold	Diary	1678	1712 +	1712	1715	34	Manchester
Dudley Ryder	Diary	1691	1715 +	1715	1716	24	London
John Cannon	Autobiography	1684	1734 -	1684	1734	50	Glastonbury
	Diary	1684	1735 +	1735	1743	50	
William Stout	Autobiography	1665	1743 -	1664	1743	79	Lancaster
Thomas Turner	Diary	1729	1754 +	1754	1765	24	East Hoathly

* + indicates a diary (looking forward), - indicates a memoir (looking back)

These diaries are much used by researchers: Edmund Harrold's diary has been referenced by at least 60 scholars since 1980, Ryder's by 140, Cannon's by 85, Stout's by 145 and Turner's by 200.[497] Since the focus of this chapter is on their multiple senses of obligation, the use of these diaries made by other scholars will not usually be referenced unless particularly relevant.

The diaries describe a period from 1664 to 1765, but those accounts begun in the seventeenth century were autobiographical (at least in part) and were penned well into the eighteenth century, in the main reflecting the attitudes of the author at the time of writing. All were men (there are few extant diaries written by middling women in this period), one was a student with few responsibilities but thinking about his future (Ryder) and the others were working men pursuing a main trade alongside subsidiary occupations to supplement their income. They came from differing social strata, drawn out in their individual descriptions below. One was based in London (Ryder) and the remainder lived in small urban or rural communities across England. The student (Ryder) had few money worries of his own whilst another (Stout) proved to be an astute businessman, but the other three diarists worried constantly about making ends meet. Each had his own reason to write an account of his life and each of their accounts has a distinctive tone. Together they cannot

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[496] William Matthews, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written Between 1442 and 1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950); Elaine Mckay, 'English Diarists: Gender, Geography and Occupation, 1500-1700', *History*, 90.298 (2005), 191–212 (p. 193).
[497] 'EBSCOhost', searched June 2024.

be said to represent a cross-section of English society but they do bring a variety of attitudes and experiences to the study.

The diaries

Edmund Harrold (1712-1715)

Harrold occupied the lowest status of our diarists and the editor of his diary frequently describes both him and his account as 'plebeian'.[498] He was based in Manchester (then a town of 8,000 inhabitants) and worked as a wigmaker and barber supplementing his income by dealing in books, sometimes in bulk but mostly as single copies (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of Harrold's reading habits).[499] The eldest son of a Manchester tobacconist, he received sufficient education to be both literate and sufficiently numerate to conduct his business. He began his diary in 1709 but only the volume for 1712-15 survives, describing his daily round, his efforts to eke out a living, his struggles with his religious conscience and his unsuccessful efforts to control his alcohol problems.

The account begins when Harrold was 34 and married to his second wife Sarah who died later that year. He maintained a small number of close friends whom he usually met in taverns. He rarely entertained at home and mainly socialised or sealed business deals in taverns although he also maintained a "publick shop" which customers would visit for a shave, haircut or to purchase a book.[500] Harrold made occasional visits to see his mother and also maintained a close relationship with the father and brother of his first wife, often turning to them for advice. His diary presents him as a somewhat weak, unimaginative and sometimes depressed individual who understood his weaknesses but was unable to overcome them.

The diary itself was written in heavily abbreviated longhand. Besides commentary on his personal and business affairs, there is a strong focus on his religious trials, with frequent appeals to God to help him live a better more sober life. The very many abbreviations and elisions suggest that Harrold wrote entirely for his own purposes and, unlike some accounts we will discuss, he never addressed comments to some future reader. He hinted at the purpose of the diary at the start of his volume as an exercise in moral improvement:

> Ive been taken up with a review of my life past since 1709, in which I find many to humble as well as raise me up. I pray God it may have this affect on me to mend what I have in my power, to mend for ye time to come, amen.[501]

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[498] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. ix, xiii, xiv, xxiii, xxxi.
[499] Population estimate taken from Craig Andrew Horner, '"Proper Persons to Deal with": Identification and Attitudes of Middling Society in Manchester, C1730-1760.' (unpublished Ph.D., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2001), p. 44.
[500] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 2 and n, 45.
[501] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 3.

Dudley Ryder (1715-16)

Whilst Ryder shared Harrold's desire for self-improvement, there was little else that the two had in common. A serious young law student with few responsibilities, Ryder enjoyed the cosmopolitan resources of London and spent much of his time either in the coffeehouses around Fleet Street or visiting relations. He was well-educated, having attended a nonconformist academy in Hackney followed by law studies at both Edinburgh and Leiden universities. At the start of his diary, he was a student at Middle Temple and living in nearby lodgings, walking the four miles to the family home in Hackney each Sunday and occasionally at other times. Ryder's father was an important figure in the local dissenting community and the family home had frequent visitors. Sundays were a time for devotion and Dudley would attend church at least once, usually spending the afternoons reading devotional literature. On a typical weekday, he would spend time on either legal studies or reading a wide range of topics. He might also practise on his viol or take a lesson from his dancing or music master and then tour the local coffeehouses in search of friends where they might talk about philosophy, politics or literature or engage in gossip and raillery. He rarely drank alcohol and only once mentioned being "very warm with drinking wine".[502]

Ryder kept extensive personal records and his archive at Sandon (Staffs.) contains many of his later notebooks, letter books and legal notes although the only diary notebook to survive is that for 1715 and 1716. His longhand writing (such as letters) can be ponderous and over-worked but the shorthand notes and diary are in a freer style, reflecting his more immediate thoughts and reactions. Most of Ryder's letters and general notebooks were carefully transcribed by William Matthews in the 1950s and remain in manuscript form in the Ryder Archive together with the full transcription of his diary. The published diary (Methuen, 1939) consists of around one-half of the total manuscript, but the selection was skilfully executed, and omissions largely consist of summaries of sermons and books.[503] Significant entries that were omitted from the published edition have been included in the database for this research. Ryder's judicial notebooks are scheduled for publication by the Selden Society in 2026.

Ryder was an earnest young man, most at home in the company of like-minded male friends. In the company of more gregarious men and among the young ladies of his acquaintance he was often at a loss, finding it difficult to find suitable topics with which to entertain them. He looked forward to a companionable marriage and solid legal career, "I hope I shall be able to bear a

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[502] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 218.
[503] Editor's note, Ryder, *Diary*, p. viii, confirmed by comparison of the Methuen edition with the full manuscript.

tolerable character in life as a lawyer, though I cannot expect anything extraordinary".[504] It would have surprised both him and his friends to learn that this diffident young man would one day hold the two great legal offices of state, Attorney General and Chief Justice.

His diary is an exercise in introspection. He began it on the suggestion of a friend with clear intentions to:

> mark down every day whatever occurs to me in the day worth observing… It will help me to know myself better and give a better judgement of my own ability and what I am best qualified for. I shall know what best suits my own temper, what is most likely to make me easy and contented and what the contrary. I should know how the better to spend my time in the future. It will help me to recollect what I have read.[505]

He sustained these intentions across the eighteen months covered by the extant diary recording his thoughts concerning events, conversations, books and relationships and subjecting his actions and opinions to critical examination.

John Cannon (1684-1743)

An inveterate writer and recorder, Cannon kept notes of his life from his early teenage years onwards, later collating them into a single narrative which he set out its final form in 1734, aged fifty, after which he began a more detailed daily diary. The scholarly edition of his Chronicles forms two lengthy volumes, the first is autobiographical taking his account to 1734, and the second diaristic covering the period to 1743.[506]

Cannon was raised in West Lidford, a small village in central Somerset, the eldest son of a smallholder and butcher. He started school early and considered himself a good scholar whose intellectual skills destined him for greater things which he thought might include being a "deserving member of any of the 2 universities of this nation".[507] He believed this destiny was thwarted by short-sighted parents who put him to work on the land at thirteen. He proved an indifferent husbandman, devoting more time to reading than tending his sheep, and so taught himself the necessary skills to be appointed as an Excise Officer. His meticulous attention to detail and the precise letter of the law made him an effective officer but his irascible nature and unyielding approach led him into frequent arguments with his superiors and he was eventually dismissed. He then set up a school in Glaston (Glastonbury) and supplemented his income by exploiting his legal, mathematical and administrative skills as clerk to the vestry and as the first port-of-call for anyone requiring legal, accountancy or surveying help. He married and raised a family which continued to

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[504] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 223.
[505] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 29.
[506] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. xvii.
[507] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 28.

live in his home village whilst he lived and worked in Glaston around 9 miles away, commuting between the two at weekends.

Cannon's account describes his daily life and fortunes in a thoroughly self-centred style. He had few close friends and maintained volatile relationships with his extended family, the major focus of his diary being his business relationships. It is a feature of his writing that he felt himself surrounded by others who were more short-sighted, less intelligent or more venal than himself and his account reads at times as a self-justification, cataloguing his thwarted attempts to better himself. He began his biography with laudable aims, to provide

> a true and impartial account of the life and transactions of the author intermixed with [a] variety of useful and profitable digressions which he hopes will not only entertain but give great delight and satisfaction to the courteous reader.[508]

However, by the beginning of the second volume where he turned to a diaristic mode, his discontent became explicit:

> Thus having shown thee, Courteous Reader, my opinion, principle & faith against the calumnies & scandals of some prejudicial people that fain would make the world believe of me, having or knowing no sound reason to ground their vain sentiments not only of their own but much less that of mine.[509]

On occasions such as these, the account is explicitly addressed to some ill-defined future reader, yet the sheer detail, whether about transactions, conversations, arguments or pedantic notes (for instance, calculating the interest on a loan to the nearest one-hundredth of a farthing), would be of little interest to another reader and suggests that Cannon's writing was mainly for his own benefit either in reliving and recording his daily life or as writerly exercises as poet, biographer or travel writer (forms all present within his account). Perhaps the diary represented to him his *magnum opus*, a demonstration of the academic potential he had once shown.

William Stout (1664-1743)

William Stout's account of his life is by comparison a very restrained piece of writing. He generally refrained from expressing opinions about politics, religion or other people except when he worried about their ability to make a success of their business. He lived simply and unostentatiously, never marrying but taking in his sickly sister who acted as his housekeeper and support. He applied himself to making a living honestly and fairly and took a clear moral stance in his business dealings, for example refusing to make an unfair profit or to barter:

> I always detested that [which] is common, to aske more for goods than the market price, or what they may be aforded for; but usualy set the price at one word, which seemed ofensive to many who think they never buy cheape exept they get abatement of the first price set upon

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[508] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 3.
[509] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 241.

them … And I observed that such plaine dealing obliged worthy customers and made busines goe forward with few words.[510]

Stout was the son of a yeoman farmer who kept him in school until he was 14 so that he would receive an education sufficient to fit him for trade.[511] He was then apprenticed to a Quaker ironmonger, gaining from his master both a good grounding in his trade and sufficient respect for his master's faith that he was himself admitted to the Society of Friends around 1686 aged 21.[512] Stout now used the £120 capital bequeathed to him by his now-deceased father to establish his own shop in Lancaster and he built a successful retail business later expanding into wholesale distribution. He made a good steady profit every year despite providing substantial financial support to his extended family. When he retired from trading in 1728 and handed over his shop and contents (valued at £400) as a gift to his nephew, he still had a fortune of some £5,000 to live on.[513] Stout's reputation as an honest and efficient businessman made him a significant local figure and he became clerk and treasurer to the local branch of the Society of Friends, representing it at regional and national meetings and serving on the body supporting Quakers imprisoned for their beliefs.[514] Similarly, he earned sufficient respect among local tradesmen, fellow Quakers and neighbours that he was frequently asked to manage a bankruptcy, execute a will or act as a will's trustee.

The autobiography itself is a straightforward annual summary of his life, favouring the factual over the emotional. It was written towards the end of his life and the account ended in 1743 when Stout was 79 although he survived a further nine years. Its focus was on trade, his extended family and his various voluntary activities with an emphasis on financial and administrative matters. Whilst his original notes have not survived, his editor considers from internal evidence that Stout kept very detailed notes and accounts throughout his life and, when writing his biography, he could also call on other paperwork such as wills, contracts and letters.[515] Stout gave no reason for writing his account and no clues concerning whether he intended it to be read by anyone else. Probably composed during a long recovery from a serious fall in 1743, his final account notes that, as a result of his accident, "my inward bruses affects me in my head and interalls, which has much weakned

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510 Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 90.
511 Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 68–72.
512 Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 82–86.
513 Whilst financial comparisons based on inflation are always problematic, this represents an earned income today of between £746,000 based on the Consumer Price Index ('Inflation Calculator', *Bank of England* <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> [accessed 27 March 2024]); and £11.7m based on economic cost, derived from 'Measuring Worth - Purchasing Power of the Pound' <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/> [accessed 11 May 2022].
514 Stout, *passim*; Polly Hamilton, 'Stout, William (1665–1752), Grocer and Ironmonger', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
515 Editor's Introduction, Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 17–19.

my constitution, and brings old age upon [me] very much", although he added that two months later he had sufficiently recovered to take a seven-mile walk.[516] It may have been this sense of his own mortality that encouraged him to review his life's work and write his account of it.

Thomas Turner (1754-1765)

The surviving pages of Thomas Turner's diary span 11 years from 1754 beginning five years after he had established himself as a shopkeeper in the village of East Hoathly near Lewes in Sussex. He was now 24 years old, recently married and running a successful business. The account finishes in 1765 when Turner, aged 35 and now a widower of four years, had just married his second wife, with his business in the doldrums. At the start of the diary his first wife Peggy was pregnant with their first child although the baby survived only five months and there were no more pregnancies. Peggy was not a well woman and suffered sometimes painful illnesses, dying in 1761. Despite an at times fractious relationship, Turner greatly mourned his wife's passing and, for much of the remaining four years of the diary, he did not regain his previous equilibrium.

The diary recounts his daily life and business activities around the neighbourhood and further afield, noting events, conversations, visits, and meals. Whilst it is mostly a straightforward account, Turner used its pages to write about his worries, disputes and fears for the future. It is a very personal diary and never implies another reader (other than, perhaps, some notional listener or his future self), for example excluding unnecessary descriptions or explanations. Whilst his daybooks would have contained detailed business accounts, he frequently used his diary to give summaries of transactions and occasionally slipped into accountancy mode to provide great detail about a particular deal, such entries being suggestive of the attention to detail he probably reserved for his daybook. The current published version of his diary accounts for just over a third of the full surviving text (around 130,000 words from a total of over 330,000 words).[517]

As the only shopkeeper in the parish, Turner would deal in most commodities, buying locally or through a network of suppliers and also making small items for sale. A great deal of cash passed through his hands and he was in effect the local banker, exchanging bonds and bills for cash or goods or processing payments through his suppliers. He also provided administrative services and was the local undertaker, making the necessary arrangements and providing the various funeral gifts for distribution. As an educated man he was often consulted by others to assist them in drawing up tax accounts or composing letters, and he was included in the social gatherings

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[516] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 239.
[517] Turner, *Diary*, pp. v–vi.

attended by leading citizens, although often taking part reluctantly since he did not enjoy the boisterous nature of these occasions.

The impression left by Turner's account is of a dutiful and assiduous man conscious of the need for straight dealing and always willing to give to good causes even when times were hard. Poorer friends were frequently welcomed to meals or found paid work and he was critical of those who were less generous or who were unwilling to set or pay a reasonable level of poor rate. He applied himself equally to his civic duties and was prepared to stand up to those who were over-zealous in the use of their powers.

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Each of these diarists portrayed their obligations in ways reflective of their particular circumstances, their priorities and their local contexts but we now need to examine to what extent these perspectives inform us about the wider social contexts in which they operated.

Communities of Obligation

We have noted that diarists' attitudes changed depending on the type of relationship being discussed. These various contacts could be considered as falling into distinct groupings, what might be termed communities of obligation in which individuals had mutual expectations based on shared perspectives. My phrase 'communities of obligation' consciously mirrors Barbara Rosenwein's conception of emotional communities which she uses to describe groups (family, neighbourhood, church) in which affective relationships predominate, those "in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals".[518] Whilst there can be considerable overlap between these emotional communities and their parallel social groupings, the term is useful to historians who wish to privilege the feelings and attitudes that could dominate social interactions. There is obvious utility in this approach when we consider the affective nature of obligation since our diarists tended not merely to describe events or conversations but to emphasise what they felt about those events or conversations. The depth of those feelings was often a function of the emotional distance between the diarist and the object of the obliged or obliging behaviour, the strongest and more nuanced emotions often being invoked towards those closest to them. We will therefore consider the most significant of these communities of obligation, beginning with the closest ties.

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[518] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 24–25; see also her 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *The American Historical Review*, 107.3 (2002), 821–45 (p. 842).

Family

Unsurprisingly, the diaries suggest that most middling people in this period wanted to live straightforward lives - to make a good marriage, follow a trade, earn enough money to maintain a family and serve God's purpose. Yet their experiences taught them that life was precarious: fortunes could be easily made and lost, debts could mount and businesses fail.[519] Disease or accident could have profound impacts on family life, with the prospect of death ever present, often leading to complex family structures and complicated financial affairs. Edmund Harrold's diary, spanning a mere three years, begins during his second marriage and it witnesses the death of this wife followed by the permanent boarding out of the daughter of his first marriage to her grandfather. He then married a third time and at the marriage ceremony the role of 'father of the bride' was taken by the father of his own first wife, her father presumably being dead.[520]

William Stout's diary provides extraordinary insights into the impacts of death on families' affairs and the preparations that many made in their wills to afford protection to their families. Stout was well-respected both within the Quaker community and more widely by neighbours and business associates. He was therefore frequently called upon to witness wills, act as executor and manage the trusts they set up for the benefit of their surviving families. At the peak of his career, Stout could be required to execute two or three fresh wills in a year, a sometimes heavy and time-consuming task often involving overseeing trusts for up to twenty years to protect the surviving partner and children. Stout's accounts attest to the complexity of some of the resulting family structures with, for example, successive deaths and remarriages of parents leaving children in the care of unrelated stepparents. Surviving children might therefore find themselves brought up variously by stepparents, grandparents or other relatives, boarded out into service or taken into apprenticeship, and Stout was involved in managing children's affairs in all of these variants. When all else failed, he even took one child into his household until she was sixteen to guarantee her continued schooling.[521]

All of our diarists were exercised by questions of marriage, discussing both its ideals and practice, and we will return to this topic later; but it was extended family relationships beyond marriage, those involving parents, siblings and their children, that were most discussed. Such

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[519] Financial insecurity among the middling sort has been much studied. See, for example, Tawny Paul, 'Losing Wealth: Debt and Downward Mobility in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Routledge History of Poverty, c.1450-1800* (Routledge, 2020), pp. 103–19; Hunt, *The Middling Sort*; Naomi Tadmor, 'Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change', *Continuity and Change*, 25.1 (2010), 15–48 (pp. 19–27).
[520] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 86.
[521] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 111.

matters were straightforward for our youngest diarist, Dudley Ryder since he had limited responsibilities of his own and his few family obligations came naturally to him - respect for his parents (though sometimes tinged with criticism), duty to visit or write to older relatives, social dependence on his sister-in-law who hosted gatherings of her female friends (many of which might be a potential wife), and a growing concern for his younger brother who appeared to have unsuitable friends and unexplained money to spend. It is this latter situation which gave him his first taste of the burdens of family obligation when he chose to take on the responsibility to discuss his concerns first with his wise Aunt Billio, then raise them tentatively (and then more insistently) with his father and finally directly with his brother.[522]

Edmund Harrold's family life was also relatively straightforward since he had few relatives of his own and fewer resources with which to help others, but the truncated nature of many of his entries can make it difficult to be precise about some of his relationships. In particular, he used family titles liberally, bestowing the title *mother* or *father* on both his parents and his parents-in-law, reflecting the interdependent nature of their relationship. He made social calls on both current and past in-laws and could also turn to them for advice, particularly his first father-in-law, 'father Bancroft', who became custodian of his daughter and gave him business and personal advice. Harrold had little contact with his sister Frances living in Salford but he made much of Robert Crossley when he returned to Manchester after eight years away. His editor assumes that Richard was a brother wigmaker rather than a relative,[523] but Harrold described him on his arrival as his "new-found brother" and referred to him thenceforth as "brother Crossley" rather than simply by name which he did with other business associates. Whether or not there was a family connection, Harrold demonstrated a rare level of obligation towards him, taking him immediately to see 'father and mother' (probably the parents of his first or second wife as his own father was long deceased), lent him linens and stockings and stayed with him all evening. When Robert's project to open his own shop failed, Harrold wrote, "So I find yt I must endeavour to imploy him", and Robert immediately started to work for him. At considerable personal cost, Harrold later rescued Crossley from insolvency and helped him return to Jersey in search of a new life.[524]

The irascible John Cannon had as tempestuous a relationship with his brother and sister as he did with most of his acquaintances. He held a resentment borne of a sense that they had been treated preferentially by their parents both as children and in the settlement of the parents' wills.

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[522] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 83–84, 273.
[523] Harrold, *Diary*, p. xxii.
[524] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 87, 92, 94.

Despite frequent arguments, he kept in regular contact with them and, when he married, set up home for his wife and children close to them in his family's village even though his place of work was some nine miles away requiring him to lodge away midweek. Cannon was quick to help his sister when her husband died, organising his brother-in-law's remaining estate, managing debts to reduce the burden on her children, placing his nephew as an apprentice to a shoemaker and accepting responsibility for payment of the consideration money due to the boy's new master.[525] Following a particularly acrimonious argument with his brother, Cannon resolved not to set foot in his brother's house "for a 12-month except sickness, death of any of his family should call me thereto". Nonetheless, he ensured that the breach did not extend further, telling his wife and children "they should by no means absent themselves but use their freedom, love & good neighbourhood as heretofore one towards another", and he made up the dispute once the year was out.[526]

With no wife or children of his own, William Stout's extended family were important to him and he expected to support them, even extending help to great-nieces and nephews. From early in his career, Stout took in his elder sister who suffered from ill-health, and she became a great support to him keeping his house, running the shop in his absence, and supervising apprentices. He also took in his mother when she became infirm in old age to avoid her becoming a burden on other family members, and he financially supported his brother allowing him to run the family small-holding rent-free when Stout inherited it. Against his better judgement, he took as an apprentice his nephew (also William) who, despite partially destroying the shop by playing tricks in the gunpowder store, Stout allowed to complete his apprenticeship and then set him up in a shop on his own account.[527] This nephew's businesses failed twice but each time Stout squared the debt and eventually provided William with an allowance of £40 a year to avoid him taking on yet another risky business venture.

Thomas Turner was diligent in support of his family though he frequently felt unwelcomed, "Whether just or imaginary I cannot, no, I will not, say, but I think I was received very coldly, not only by my mother but all the family".[528] Nonetheless, he regularly visited and supported his mother, entertained her and other family members at his own home, took Philip, the illegitimate son of his half-sister, into his household to teach him a trade, and arranged an apprenticeship for

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[525] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 252.
[526] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 372.
[527] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 190.
[528] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 30–31.

his brother Richard supporting him when he eventually took over the family shop.[529] Turner kept a weather eye on his family's fortunes but he also felt the financial burdens of family more directly through loans, unpaid debts and demands on his time, particularly when trade was poor, "I think it makes me quite by myself. I am so confined with family connections and some large debtors in my parish that I hardly know which way to act or extricate myself out of so great a dilemma".[530]

Family was thus of both interest and concern to all our diarists, and this is unsurprising since it was the essential core of their personal and social life. Importantly, they each recognised that life was a precarious enterprise and they worried about protecting themselves and family members against disaster: for many, family inter-dependence represented the most reliable form of social security.[531] Most families had insufficient surpluses to make them entirely proof against financial calamity and, if the main breadwinner was affected, the whole household could fall on hard times, what Peter Laslett termed 'nuclear hardship'.[532] At such times they had to turn to their wider kin group or sympathetic neighbours, public subscription, charities or, *in extremis*, the Poor Rate, and the importance of good family networks has been widely discussed. For example, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos has focused on the materiality of support, Naomi Tadmor has highlighted the interactions between advantage and affect, Susannah Ottaway has focused on support for elderly relatives and Amy Harris has considered mutual support among siblings.[533]

The term *family* was itself a complex one and did not have a universally consistent meaning. For example, many of our diarists used the suffix 'in-law' only when the context necessitated it, omitting it otherwise, the implication being that, on marriage, each partner absorbed the familial obligations of the other. Dudley Ryder's diary mentioned his sister-in-law Anne very frequently, both as a personality in her own right and as the centre of a young social circle, and Ryder always termed her 'sister'. The exceptions to this general rule were markedly so. Turner disliked his mother-in-law so intensely that he described her as one who "might do well to sell oysters at Billingsgate", and he consequently made a conscious decision to call her 'Mrs Slater', adding "for I

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[529] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 85, 3.

[530] Turner, *Diary*, p. 266.

[531] See n.519

[532] Richard Smith, 'Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare: Reflections from Demographic and Family History', in *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in Britain.*, ed. by Martin Daunton (London: UCL Press, 1996), p. 26; Peter Laslett, 'Family, Kinship and Collectivity as Systems of Support in Pre-Industrial Europe: A Consideration of the "Nuclear-Hardship" Hypothesis', *Continuity and Change*, 3.02 (1988), 153–75.

[533] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 17–41; Tadmor, 'Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run'; Susannah R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 141–72; Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: Share and Share Alike* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

am sure her usage to me was never like that of a mother", but her rather more welcoming husband was consistently termed 'father Slater'.[534] The ungenerous Cannon always used the epithet 'in-law' and differentiated his treatment of those relations accordingly.

Naomi Tadmor has extended our understanding of the concept of family in her *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*.[535] Through her detailed study of Thomas Turner's diary, three fictional accounts and two conduct texts as well as other texts she has brought eighteenth-century usages to the fore as well as revealing that *family* often included all those living in the household at that time - not only relatives but also servants, apprentices and other temporary residents, and this is the principal usage in Turner's account. When away for dinner he would describe what his "family at home" was eating and Sunday attendance at church routinely included his "family" even when it included no relatives. The discourses of obligation to servants and apprentices were explored in the previous chapter through the writing of Daniel Defoe and others, and those expectations of responsibility towards these wider groups are embodied in Turner's diary. However, Turner's usage (equating *family* with *household*) was not universal, and our other diarists reserved *family* for those who were related by blood or marriage. Nonetheless, and to varying degrees, they felt obligations towards the others in their household which will be explored in the next section.

Household

The diarists' specific domestic circumstances varied and this, as much as personal attitudes, affected their sense of obligation towards the others with whom they lived. Ryder occupied lodgings and his personal arrangements appear to have been unimportant to him since he commented on them only in the most perfunctory of ways. This indifference is probably a function of his youth and lack of responsibility, for we can glimpse a later more mature concern in the 54-year-old Ryder who, as Chief Justice preparing for a possible invasion of London by the French, planned in his notebook for both the safety of the Royal Family and, with the same care, for his own household including his servants.[536] For all of Cannon's adult life, he also was a lodger as, even after marriage, he lived apart midweek in Glaston. He rarely mentioned the domestic circumstances of the family home (other than requests from his wife for money) but he wrote frequently about his lodgings though always expressed in terms of his expectations of his landlord rather than any

[534] Turner, *Diary*, p. 106.
[535] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*.
[536] Dudley Ryder, 'Manuscript Notes', transcribed by William Matthews (Sandon, 1936), Harrowby Manuscripts Trust, Vol. 433.

obligation he might have as a household member. He expected certain standards of both behaviour and service and took full advantage of them including, as a footloose young man, sexual favours from maidservants. If he became unhappy with the domestic arrangements he simply moved elsewhere.

The other three diarists maintained a household although, in Harrold's case, this was a simple affair with just a single servant who featured little in his diary. Turner absorbed into his household a series of female servants and his step-nephew Philip, taking his responsibilities towards them seriously. Even after servants left, he maintained contact with them; Mary Martin came back to cover emergencies and help in his home or the shop and she joined him for meals as a guest at other times. When Sarah Waller left his service to become maid to her uncle, Turner continued to counsel her about her unhappy new position. Stout's domestic arrangements were the most complicated since they changed many times over his lifetime. Once he established his shop, he initially lived in the rooms attached to it but took board from a neighbour. He then created his own household involving his sister, occasional relatives and a series of servant girls and apprentices. After the death of his sister, he initially took other female relatives as housekeepers but these proved unsatisfactory and, in older age, he gave up his household and lodged either with neighbours or with his unreliable nephew and family. Despite all these variations of dependency, both his own need for care and the dependence of others on him, Stout rarely described any obligation as being specifically contingent on these household arrangements. Rather he felt his obligations more widely, treating household members in need in the same way as he treated others. He was unfailingly generous to his nephew William at every stage of their relationship - as a child, when becoming his apprentice, when William started his first shop, when he took over Stout's shop on retirement and when Stout boarded with him.

The exceptions to this general rule were the special relationships Stout established with his apprentices. Once he took a boy as an apprentice, Stout saw this as a long-term commitment - to train the boy as best he could, allow him increasing responsibility and autonomy in the business as preparation for future independent trade, lend him money, stock and equipment to allow the newly qualified young man to set up in business, and finally provide continuing advice. These obligations extended even into business failure - having served his apprenticeship, John Troughton was set up in his own ironmongery business and Stout recommended him to suppliers; when Troughton mismanaged the business into failure, Stout then felt a continuing obligation towards Troughton's creditors, "as he had been my apprentice, and the begining of his creddit by my recomendition, I thought my selfe obliged to use my endevors to make the most for the crediters". He arranged the

sale of the stock to maximise income for the creditors, then made bids himself to create competition and keep the prices high and ended up having to purchase significant amounts himself at a high price. He also felt obligated towards Troughton's apprentice and so set up another retail business to sell the goods he had just acquired so that the boy could complete the last two years of his apprenticeship.[537]

Thus, our diarists regarded their households differently - Turner privileged his household as a primary unit of obligation, Stout's rather more universal sense of obligation applied equally to those with whom he shared a roof and the other three diarists, at least on the evidence of their diaries, gave little special consideration to their cohabitants.

Friends

Rather as she did with *family*, Naomi Tadmor has considered the special meanings attributed to *friend* in this period, noting that "In the eighteenth century, the term 'friend' had a plurality of meanings that spanned kinship ties, sentimental relationships, economic ties, occupational connections, intellectual and spiritual attachments, sociable networks, and political alliances".[538] The term could be applied to a wide range of supporters - those who felt obligation by affiliation and so ought to have one's best interests at heart, including family members, patrons, employers, close business associates and others. Turner described many instances when supporters rallied round to help individuals in distress - for example, he "Gave James Bull 2s. 2d., he having a petition for to ask the charity of his friends and neighbours".[539] However, the word could also take on sardonic tones, implying that one's so-called supporters were behaving rather less than helpfully and Turner frequently used this sense, for example, in describing a disagreement with his mother and brother, "What my friends would have with me I know not; I have always done to the utmost of my power to serve them". Contemporary usage placed one's relatives within the ambit of one's friends, but there were also gradations and differences which can be particularly noted in Turner's description of his father's death in a later autobiographical note, "In him I lost the best of parents, he was to me a parent, friend and brother".[540]

Most of the diarists referred to *friends* in the sense of supporters who, through their advice, lobbying or more direct aid demonstrated their obligation towards another, but they also had

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[537] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 148–50.
[538] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p. 167.
[539] Turner, *Diary*, p. 145.
[540] Thomas Turner, *The Diary of a Georgian Shopkeeper*, ed. by G.H. Jennings, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 79.

special intimates whose company they enjoyed and on whom they could rely on a daily basis. Harrold had three close associates who fulfilled multiple roles as drinking companions, business associates, fellow book-enthusiasts and advisers, "I saw al[l] ye 3 friends this night and had conference wth ym, both pub:[lic] [and] private. Tis a great blessing to have a true friend to advise with".[541] For Stout, *Friends* could have special meaning as members of "the religious society of the people called Quakers" but he also cultivated a small number of close friendships, though he usually commented on their friendship only on their parting, for example:

> "Richard Green died, aged about 34 years. He was my intimat friend and sociable companion in diverting our selves in walking together on the Green Arie [Ayre] and in the feilds, in the day in summer, and in moonlight nights in winter, all the time I kept shop".[542]

Friendship was particularly sought by our diarists, and all mentioned it as a highly valued virtue, for example in relation to the desirable qualities to be sought in a wife (discussed later).

Neighbours and Community

As the diarists' circles of obligation widened, they fell into two distinct groups - a tighter circle of obligation towards known individuals (neighbours, more distant relatives or individuals seeking personal help) and a more distant one encompassing less well-defined groups in the form of charitable or civic duty.

Three of our diarists rarely mentioned charitable giving. Whilst this may reflect their attitudes it might also be something they simply took for granted which did not warrant inclusion in their diaries. Dudley Ryder certainly admired charitable actions - whilst he was generally highly critical of his Uncle Marshall's high Tory prejudices, he respected Marshall's attitude to charity in comparison with that of his father, "I think [it] is an admirable quality and which I cannot but be sorry when I see so much wanted in my father".[543] John Cannon sometimes commented on others' charitable actions, for example twice referring to the "the Charity Coulston" (Edward Colston, the slave trader and philanthropist), but he rarely mentioned any charitable activity of his own.[544] Charitable giving was a routine part of Thomas Turner's life and he made donations both on a regular basis and as the occasion demanded. On his Saint's Day every year he gave 1*d.* to each of the parish's poor (usually around thirty souls), and each 26th December handed out 'box money', the postman receiving 12*d.* and others 2*d.,* 3*d. or* 6*d*. When beggars called at his door he routinely gave them money and he frequently joined the rector in collecting for 'briefs' (royal mandates for collections

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[541] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 2.
[542] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 140.
[543] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 313–14.
[544] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 72,264.

towards some worthy cause).[545] For example, in 1765, they undertook a door-to-door collection to raise money for the losses caused by a hailstorm in Sussex, Turner giving *1s. 2½d*, the third highest contribution after those of the wealthy rector and a substantial farmer.[546] Despite being a generous man, William Stout did not mention giving to charity nor expressly about doing good works; his was a very practical form of Christianity - to do rather than to talk, "beleiving that all who walk according to the moral law to do to others as they would be done by, and are obedient to what they are convinced they ought to do … are accepted of the Lord God".[547]

Without a household of his own, Ryder was not called upon to carry out any civic role although he had in his father a role model of service to his religious community, but all the other diarists performed some kind of civic duty. Attitudes to public service could vary, particularly when taking on the sometimes very onerous duties associated with public office: overseer of the poor, commissioner of roads, churchwarden and a surprising array of more minor roles, particularly in market towns.[548] For some, it was a civic duty or a necessary consequence of being a leading citizen whilst, for others, it was a role they were ill-equipped or ill-prepared to perform. The East Hoathly vestry decided in 1757 that Ed. Hope should serve as overseer of the poor but he refused, as did Jos. Burges so, as churchwarden, Turner had to obtain a summons to force Burges to accept the role.[549] Turner himself was an active participant in civic affairs serving variously as overseer of the poor, churchwarden, surveyor, overseer of highways, and assessor and collector of land and window taxes. He also taught the local school for a period and managed the finances of local charities. Turner was a meticulous overseer of the poor, spending many days pursuing the reluctant bridegroom of an unmarried mother or arranging and attending the post-mortem examination of a suspected suicide.[550]

Even the lowly Edmund Harrold took part in civic duties, albeit in more modest roles. He was co-opted as a 'market looker' to check butter weights and milk measures but the fact that he was 'summoned' to perform the role suggests that he was compelled rather than volunteered. He was also elected to serve as dog muzzler but did so reluctantly, even being fined for non-attendance.[551] As he was not a householder, Cannon was not called upon to serve but he did so vicariously as clerk

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[545] For a description of briefs, see the Editor's footnote, Turner, *Diary*, p. 158 n.37.

[546] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 315–16.

[547] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 85–86.

[548] For accounts of local governance see, for example, Horner, '"Proper Persons to Deal With"'; Alistair Mutch, 'Custom and Personal Accountability in Eighteenth-Century South Nottinghamshire Church Governance', *Midland History*, 36.1 (2011), 69–88.

[549] Turner, *Diary*, p. 95 and n.19.

[550] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 93–94, 50–54.

[551] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 13, 37, 92 and n.3.

to the vestry, his account being a rich source of information concerning the activities for which he was engaged - taking minutes, preparing accounts and formal documents or implementing decisions. He was also frequently hired by those performing public office to draw up their accounts in the required manner including two female overseers of the poor, both prominent landowners.[552] As a Quaker, Stout did not describe any civic activity other than as collector of taxes, but he was a leading member of the local Society of Friends.[553]

The reasons for taking on civic duties were varied and most, even the conscientious Turner, did so reluctantly because of the burdensome work involved. There were compensations, however. Office could lend status and the opportunity to mix socially with other 'leading' citizens and there could also be more material compensations - Turner was critical of some of his fellow office-holders who used the influence of office to reduce their financial burdens, "Mr. Carman was the chief, nay only, instrument of its [the poor rate] not being made, and that for no other reason than to serve his own private ends and to be assessed lower according to the law than anyone else".[554] There were also other minor rewards of office since vestry meetings frequently finished with refreshments paid from a standing allowance; Cannon mentioned an allocation of 1*s.* each for their dinner with additional 'extraordinaries' whilst Turner could report, "In the even went to the vestry at Mr. Burges's … We spent on the parish account 8*s.* 3*d.*, and 6*d.* each of our own money, and all parted very near quite sober".[555]

Spheres of obligation

Turning now from those to whom obligation was owed and focusing on those areas of life in which obligation was most felt, we will consider three major areas which occupied the minds of our diarists: religion, relationships and money.

Religion & Beliefs

Each of our writers was religious and acknowledged the role of God and the obligations of religion in their lives, albeit with varying degrees of attention and regularity. In the first half of his chronicles, Cannon does not appear a religious man and he rarely mentioned God other than to thank Him each birthday for his continuing survival; but, from 1734, Cannon began mentioning

[552] Cannon, *Chronicles*, pp. 456, 563; Whilst unusual, appointments of women to elected administrative posts were not unknown. See Sarah Richardson, 'Petticoat Politicians: Women and the Politics of the Parish in England', *The Historian*, 12.1 (2013) I am grateful to John Sullivan for bringing this source to my attention.
[553] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 166–68.
[554] Turner, *Diary*, p. 289. See also 67-68, 267–68.
[555] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 535; Turner, *Diary*, p. 316.

God's goodness a great deal more often, thanking Him when faced with some act of good fortune or praying for his benefactress, Mrs Pope. There were also increasing references to attending church, although their previous absence may have been because he considered attendance to be a very normal activity which he omitted from the more concise (and edited) earlier entries.

Edmund Harrold was in rather more frequent conversation with his God: from the very first sentence of his diary, he was concerned over his religious duty, "June ye 1st 1712 Remarkable for being ye sacrament day, and for my debates betwixt good and bad thoughts. But God be prays'd for it, the good angel got ye better, for I went to church".[556] Harrold was immersed in religion, attending church every Sunday (often twice) summarising the sermons he heard and often briefly reminding himself how he should alter his life to meet the high expectations promoted in a sermon. Yet he struggled with the aspects of religious observance concerned with moral constancy, particularly with regard to drink. Victoria Lewis has argued that Harrold's diary was an exercise in providentialism, seeking "to regain balance and control over his drunkenness and melancholy", the diary being a practical way to seek out God's assistance.[557] His diary certainly confirms that his moral universe followed the providential traditions common in seventeenth-century practice in its assumptions that God was watching over his daily actions and was potentially prepared to intervene in events. When Harrold became more despairing during 1713, unable to control his drinking habit and undecided about a third marriage, he regularly avoided making firm decisions and left it to God to decide his fate, "I'm sattissfied, yt tis best to resign my will to Gods in all things and waite his time, for what he will do shall be done".[558]

Dudley Ryder also had a close relationship with his God. Well-educated in religious matters, he frequently analysed sermons that he had heard, with his thoughts on a particular sermon sometimes running to several pages of his diary (usually omitted from the Methuen printed edition). God was, for him, a strategist who did not intervene directly in everyday events, His word nonetheless being an important guide on how to lead the good life and fulfil His purpose:

> I have made now a serious resolution and promise to God that I will make it my duty to obey his laws in opposition to anything that may come in the way of it … Methinks I feel an unusual kind of gladness and pleasure within me now, and yet I cannot but fear that the next temptation that comes in my way will overcome this resolution.[559]

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[556] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 1.
[557] Victoria A Lewis, 'Providence, Emotion and Self-Writing in England, c.1660 – c.1720' (unpublished PhD, University of East Anglia, 2018), p. 258.
[558] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 78–79.
[559] The portion in square brackets was omitted from the printed version of the diary but appear in the original manuscript. Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 75–76; Dudley Ryder, 'Manuscript Diary', transcribed by William Matthews (Sandon, 1936), Harrowby Manuscripts Trust, Vol. 69a.

Thomas Turner expected to attend church on Sunday, accompanied by members of his household. He occasionally described sermons and sometimes made mention of prayers for God's guidance on religious matters or praying for sick relatives but he rarely expected God's intervention other than to give him the strength to resist temptation, "Oh, may the God of all mercy give me his grace always to detest and abhor this vice [of drunkenness]".[560] Stout was the most devout of our writers, having experienced an intellectual conversion to the Quaker way of life. However, once this decision was settled in his mind, he rarely invoked God, instead dedicating his life to performing God's purpose through works rather than assertions:

> Let our outward profession of religion be what it will, no more is required of any person but what it hath pleased God to manifest to be his duty to obey and doe. And true Christian charety will lead us not to censur one another for outward ceramony, so long as we live in love and good neighbourhood and observe the golden rule to do to others as we would expect they should do to us in al moral ocations.[561]

God was thus an important presence in the lives of all our diarists but, for most, He provided only the most general of guidance. They looked inwardly, to their own consciences, on questions of moral obligation.

Marriage, sex and relationships

All our diarists contemplated marriage and the virtues of a good wife who could be a partner in life, someone to share the pleasures and burdens of home and trade. At 24, Ryder was beginning to contemplate marriage and consequently wrote frequently about the ideal wife. He had witnessed several unreasonable or demanding women among his acquaintances and he sometimes yearned for a wife who is "meek, humble and modest", adding that "a temper is the worst thing in a wife". But he particularly sought companionship, "a person capable of advising with and consulting upon any difficulty or occurrence", and he most wanted "a pretty creature concerned in me, being my most intimate friend, constant companion and always ready to soothe me, take care of me and caress me".[562] He recognised that husbands had an equal obligation to maintain harmonious relations, commenting in reaction to the behaviour of his own father, "I will endeavour to check every hot rising of my passions if ever I should be married, especially keep the furthest possible from little offences, anything that may give uneasiness to my wife, pass by every little failing. {It is these little differences that are generally the cause of all the disquiets of the marriage

[560] Turner, *Diary*, p. 76.
[561] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 70.
[562] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 49–50, 53–54, 124, 274.

state}".[563] Ryder eventually married eighteen years later and was fortunate in finding a partner who met his expectations: he described the ideal marriage in a letter to his wife:

> I look upon matrimony, as it really is, not only as a society for life, in wch our persons & fortunes in general are concern^d, but as a partnership wherein our very passions and affections, our hopes & fears, our inclinations & aversions, all our good & ill Qualitys are brought into one Common Stock.[564]

Thomas Turner had a strained relationship with his wife, finding her at times a difficult woman to deal with. He often struggled to understand her frequent complaints but was also prepared to accept that he might share the blame,

> This day my wife and I had a great many words, but for what reason I cannot recount, though doubtless if we could be proper judges of our own actions we should find that we are both but too much to blame and possibly should find all our differences to arise from so trivial a cause that we both might have cause to blush.[565]

He dwelt frequently on the duty of both partners to maintain harmony and he greatly mourned her passing, "I have lost a sincere friend and virtuous wife, a prudent and good economist in her family and a very valuable companion (and one endued with more than a common share of good sense)".[566] He missed her companionship but also her role as his business partner, finding it difficult to both manage the shop and still be abroad buying and selling around the parish. Edmund Harrold also mourned the loss of his second wife Sarah, displaying a rare hint of an emotional life, "I besweech God almighty, who has taken my dear asistant from me, to asist me with grace and wisdom to live religiously and virtuously".[567]

Two diaries dwelt on relationships before marriage, Ryder's and Cannon's, and both distinguished between sex and courtship. John Cannon's sexual history has been scrutinised by Tim Hitchcock revealing much about eighteenth-century pre-courtship practices.[568] Cannon and the young ladies of his acquaintance sought out sexual activity, distinguishing between the pleasures of sexual play and the potential dangers of full sexual experience and they considered penetrative sex only as a precursor to marriage. These young men and women did not consider sexual activity before marriage as a moral question *per se* but, if there was a risk of pregnancy, then male obligation became an important question. Cannon treated potential marriage partners differently from the maidservants with whom he dallied, and refrained from intense sexual activity with those he courted seriously. He described the impressions made on him by his future wife: she was "Chast,

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[563] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 50 and ms, {bracketed text present only in the ms version}.
[564] Undated letter quoted in Editor's Introduction to Ryder, *Diary*, p. 20.
[565] Turner, *Diary*, p. 21.
[566] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 228–29.
[567] Harrold, *Diary*, p. 52; The circumstances of Sarah's death and Harrold's reaction to it are discussed in Sarah Fox, *Giving Birth in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: University of London Press, 2022), pp. 132–33.
[568] Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700 - 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1997), pp. 24–38.

loyal, honest & virtuous even in her greatest Tryals both of prosperity & adversity; a paternal affectionated, tender mother, a quiet & charitable neighbour & friend. In short, she was nature's absolute perfection, pious to God".[569] His account of their subsequent courtship lasting over a year made no mention of sexual activity although, as Hitchcock points out, this may have been a reluctance consequent on his wife still being alive when Cannon wrote the account.[570]

Ryder was far less sexually active and the furthest he and the young ladies of his acquaintance would go was to join in kissing games. His major concerns were with how to impress them, finding their banter and lack of seriousness difficult to engage with. He struggled to find topics of conversation, "Though I can be free with Mrs Lee yet I cannot tell how to maintain an agreeable discourse with her".[571] So concerned was he with his inability to talk freely with young women that he even sought out the company of whores to talk with them "to give me an assurance and confidence". However, not all his encounters with whores were virtuous and reference was made earlier to his having "a mind to attack a whore". He found such activities disturbing and the next diary entry commented, "Was a little uneasy this morning about what I did last night with respect to the whores. However, I have this advantage from it, that I intend never to attempt such a thing again by way of frolic as I did then", a resolve he did not quite maintain though he "{went no further with any of them than feeling their bubbies and kissing one of them but could not tell how to bring it about to feel her commodity without lying with her, which I was resolved I would not do}".[572]

Cannon and Ryder saw these adventures as merely youthful explorations and both would condemn a wandering eye within marriage, although a number of our diarists noted adulterous activity around them: a twenty-six-year-old William Stout found himself the unwelcome recipient of advances from a neighbour, she being thirty and her husband, a Virginia trader, being absent for long periods, "the familiarety encreased soe much that … I was very sensible that my neighbour … took all opertunetys in conversation and other insinuations to alure me to her bed, or to introduce her selfe into myne".[573] Stout was able, with God's help, to resist the temptation.

As would be expected, the diarists attached great significance to marriage decisions, considering not only their future happiness but also the wider duties attached to marriage, and this bore on the suitability of possible marriage partners. In choosing a third wife, Harrold took soundings from his erstwhile mother- and father-in-law, Cannon's relations suggested potential

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[569] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 99.
[570] Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700 - 1800*, p. 37.
[571] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 90. Ryder referred to all women of marriageable age as 'Mrs', whether married or not.
[572] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 71–72; 'Diary Ms'.
[573] Stout, *Autobiography*, pp. 103–4.

wives, Turner was bedevilled by false rumours concerning his intentions towards female friends, and even the steady Stout was advised by friends to look elsewhere when he briefly considered marriage to one Bethia Greene. Ryder's father had a cautionary word with him when he felt that Dudley was showing rather too much interest in one young lady, pointing out that he was not yet in a position to maintain her and she could bring little wealth of her own to the marriage. Dudley had already come to a similar conclusion, "Why should I think of having her when it would expose us both to want?"[574]

Money

Among the many financial pressures faced by individuals and businesses was the severe lack of specie, coinage with which to pay for goods and services. This coloured every transaction and could make trade a complicated affair, sometimes causing what would seem to us farcical situations such as Elizabeth Browne, a wealthy landowner, paying her poor rate to Thomas Turner in the form of a coffin worth 24*s* which he then sold on to realise the cash.[575] Payment for goods or services was frequently made in kind or as a notional transaction recorded variously as a formally witnessed bill of exchange, an informal note of hand, a running account in a notebook or simply a verbal promise, sometimes in front of witnesses. Cannon witnessed John Vincent paying Mr Lloyd £8 and, on another occasion, he relied on Christiana Bazeley to witness his agreement to rent out a meadow to the widow Lucas.[576]

Turner's East Hoathly was a web of debt and obligation with most living on credit and paying what was owed when they successfully cashed a banknote, received a payment, or the harvest was sold.[577] Much of this trade centred around the village shopkeeper and Turner acted variously as buyer, seller, guarantor, banker or shipping agent. He spent evenings balancing his books and his daily round included attempts to collect or settle debts. Accounts were frequently resolved through a mixture of cash, exchange of goods or the transfer of third-party debts with any remaining balance becoming a freshly reconciled debt.[578] Bills of exchange were treated in the manner of a banknote although usually at a discounted value, and an individual bill could pass through many hands before being cashed: Thomas Turner described a typical transaction in which Edward Budgen bought £24 of timber from a London merchant, the cash being provided by John Russel who received a Bill from

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[574] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 327, 309–10.
[575] Turner, *Diary*, p. 293.
[576] Cannon, *Chronicles*, pp. 300, 407.
[577] For a discussion of the importance of networks of trade and cash flow, see Earle, *Making of the Middle Class*, pp. 44–45 and 112-123 respectively.
[578] David Vaissey has provided a very helpful account of Turner's financial dealings as an Appendix to Turner, *Diary*, pp. 340–46.

Budgen promising to repay the loan in twenty-five days. Russell sold the Bill to Turner for cash at a discount of 2*s. 6d.* and Turner then used it to pay Robert Plumer (a wholesale grocer). Presumably, Plumer then either used the Bill to pay another debt or waited until the end of the loan period to collect the full cash sum from Budgen.[579] Both Stout and Turner, as collectors of land and window taxes, could manage sums in excess of £180. When such large cash sums were handled payment could be made in a variety of coins: those issued by the British mints (guineas, pounds, florins *etc*), Portuguese moidores and half-moidores (27*s.* and 13*s. 6d.* respectively) or Spanish doubloons (or double-pistoles), pistoles, and half-pistoles (36*s.*, 18*s.* and 9*s.* respectively).[580]

Debt was ubiquitous in the eighteenth century - a study by Craig Muldrew of probate accounts in rural Hampshire between 1623 and 1715 found that 73% of accounts included debts in some form, the average being nine debts per probate account although varying from none to sixty-three separate debts.[581] Peter Earle has pointed out that evidence from probate inventories tends to underestimate levels of debt since some debts would have been settled before inventories were drawn up. Nonetheless, he estimates that, even at this low estimate, London men owed on average around 23% of their total assets at death.[582]

Unpaid debt was a problem for our trading diarists.[583] William Stout, by the time he was 32, had been trading for nine years and had seen his worth increase from £120 to £368 but, over that same period, he had needed to write off some £220 to insolvent debtors, mostly for small individual sums.[584] Unsurprisingly, many of our diarists worried about debt, either their ability to pay what they owed or difficulty in collecting money owed to them.

Ryder's father, despite being a substantial draper, found himself in 1716 seriously in debt and "very much at a loss for money". He owed others more than the entire value of his stock (mostly lent by family members who were unlikely to foreclose), and the houses he rented out were heavily mortgaged.[585] Cannon was almost entirely dependent on payment for his services (though he also owned a small brewery) and, when times were hard, fewer people called on his services as scribe, lawyer or accountant, particularly in the 1740s when, he complained, "I was never lower in pocket

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[579] Turner, *Diary*, p. 311.
[580] See, for example, Turner, *Diary*, pp. 225–26; £180 is equivalent to around £30,000 at today's prices, see the tool 'Measuring Worth - Purchasing Power of the Pound'.
[581] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 104–5.
[582] Earle, *Making of the Middle Class*, pp. 118–19.
[583] For extensive discussion of the sources and impacts of unpaid debt, see Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 173–95; Tawny Paul, *The Poverty of Disaster: Debt and Insecurity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 67–94.
[584] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 119.
[585] Ryder, *Diary*, p. 326.

than at that time nor suffered any of my family to go home so empty-handed before, the people was so slack in paying me my dues".[586] Harrold was conscious that he always lived on the edge of insolvency, owing money and owed money in turn and at times he earned barely enough to make ends meet, "One is striving to one set [or] another in this world, and all for a litle meat and drink and cloth[e]s". After a long period of poor business he even considered "flitting" (moving away to avoid paying creditors) to start afresh elsewhere, though his new wife was against it. Yet he still found it necessary to risk his own insolvency to help his brother ward off the bailiffs.[587]

Craig Muldrew has shown that early modern uses of the term *credit* indicated moral worth (calling someone 'a man of credit' indicating not solvency but trustworthiness) and its use was often associated with an honourable intent to pay one's debts. He noted that its association with money transactions became prevalent only from the late seventeenth century and, with the exception of the carefree Ryder, all our writers relied on credit for their transactions.[588] They were keen observers of who could be trusted and who treated with caution, a man's reputation going before him. However, and contrary to our findings in Chapter 2 derived from published works, the diarists only rarely used the term *credit* as a direct reference to honour - their usages usually being concerned with money. Yet they all considered the payment of debt to be a matter of honour. As a small-time trader working in a low-status, low-pay trade, Edmund Harrold was usually short of cash and sometimes was forced to sell his stock of hair or books to pay off debts. His was a hand-to-mouth existence but he still expected to meet his obligations, "Its trew, Ive a great rent, and one slaves hard to pay it, but I bless God Ive p[ai]d it hether to, and I hope I can still". He satisfied himself that "we paid all debts borrowed", ending the month "with 2 pence, with friends".[589]

Muldrew argues that forgiveness of debt was something forced on wealthier traders either as a means of maintaining authority over the poor or to avoid the cost and effort entailed in pursuing them through the courts.[590] Yet both Stout and Turner saw debt forgiveness as acts of social duty or charity that stood outside the strictly commercial, and they would go to great lengths to avoid sending their debtors into insolvency. Of all our witnesses, Turner was probably most at risk because of his dual role as wholesaler and banker which could involve handling very large sums requiring quick turnaround to avoid substantial debt, and also as shopkeeper where he provided goods and services that would normally be settled later, sometimes very much later. His own

[586] Cannon, *Chronicles*, pp. 495–96.
[587] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 26, 104.
[588] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*.
[589] Harrold, *Diary*, pp. 26, 29, 30.
[590] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 309–10.

solvency was therefore very reliant on his customers' ability or willingness to pay and he constantly worried about cash flow. Nonetheless, he found it hard to refuse further credit to his needy neighbours and even extended credit against his better judgement, observing that "all the people of the parish grow so poor [that] … even the best will not pay above once a year". His sense of obligation was such that "I should be willing to lend them all the assistance that is in my power".[591] Even when debts became too large to ignore, he worried about the consequences of going to law to obtain payment. In echoes of Daniel Defoe's strictures to think carefully about pursuing debt discussed in Chapter 5, Turner struggled with his conscience over Thomas Darby's considerable debts built up over four years, Darby being a local spendthrift whose creditworthiness troubled Turner for most of the nine years of his diary record. By 1758 Turner was worrying about legal action against Darby, "what a terrible thing it is to arrest a person, for by this means he may be entirely torn to pieces, who might otherwise recover himself and pay everyone their own".[592] But it still took Turner a further two years to take legal action when the debt became too large to bear, yet he still agonised:

> Who can think the anxiety of my mind at the thought of distressing poor Darby! But what can I do? This seems the only chance I have for recovering a debt justly due to me … The first law of nature I think will tell me I am doing no injustice. And should I neglect this opportunity, it appears as if I should never have such another. Therefore I think if I do not do it now, I am doing a piece of injustice both to myself and creditors.[593]

William Stout lived his faith through his business dealings and, as we have already noted, he refused to haggle the price of goods, always paid his creditors, and was prepared to forgive debts owed to him. He disliked legal proceedings and

> "seldom made use of atturney, except to write letters to urge payments, being always tender of oppressing poor people with law charges, but rather to loose all or get what I could quietly, than give it to atturnies … to loose all was more satisfaction to me than getting all to the great cost of my debtor, and to the preservation of my reputation".[594]

He relished his reputation for straight and honest dealing and his autobiography shows an implicit pride in the number of people who turned to him to handle their business affairs.

Economic historians Craig Muldrew and Margot Finn have explored the ways that early modern conceptions of honour obligation fostered new mechanisms of credit and gave birth to the banking system on which the lively economies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emerged. They argue that the new system depended on the twin aspects of trust: the moral duty to pay one's

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[591] Turner, *Diary*, p. 111.
[592] Turner, *Diary*, p. 149.
[593] Turner, *Diary*, p. 252.
[594] Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 120.

debts, and the fear that default would damage one's reputation.[595] Whilst we can see aspects of these forms of obligation in the actions of our diarists, this argument does little to explain why so many continued to offer credit even when trust was low and why they strived to avoid sending others into insolvency. These actions stood outside the strictly commercial and looked to another form of obligation, the duty to be compassionate, to act charitably and to be concerned about social cohesion.

Sociable Obligation

Beyond the calls to charity and civic duty, there were also two other forms of sociable obligation at play, the need to help one's neighbours and to take part in sociable activity. Whilst neighbours might not be friends, there was still moral and social pressure to help them. Turner was routinely put upon by two neighbours (French and Piper) who frequently claimed a neighbourly expectation of his help in writing a letter or making up their window tax books, and to do so without the usual payments he might expect. Old Mr Piper was especially niggardly in both praise and reimbursement, "he sneaked away with, 'Sir, I thank you', but forgot either to pay for the paper, which was 2*d.*, or so much as to say he should be glad to have an opportunity that he might have it in his power to serve me as far".[596] Others were rather more appreciative, "In the forenoon busy a-writing for John Watford, but he pays for paper and is almost ready to smother me with thanks and does promise to serve me as far if opportunity offers".[597] Other neighbours were also quick to show their appreciation, "Tho. Tester's wife brought me 2 carp for a present", "Mr. Miller sent me for a present a very fine roasting pig", "Mr. Vine … made me a present of a brace of fine carp and 9 eels", "The gardener at Halland [the Duke of Newcastle's country seat] made my wife a present of some grapes in gratuity for my trusting him sometimes".[598] On his part, Turner frequently carried out small favours for neighbours, taking particular trouble with the recently widowed Mrs Virgoe, arranging insurance and then the sale of her house, sorting out her late husband's complex affairs and helping her draw up her will. He also invited her to meals with his family. Mrs Marchant, another widow, and her family were routinely invited to share the Turner Christmas dinner.

We have already noted the very active support that William Stout gave to his neighbours but our other witnesses were less involved with neighbourly activity. John Cannon extolled the virtues of neighbourliness, praising this quality in his future wife and his dead sister, but there were few

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[595] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*; Finn, *Character of Credit*.
[596] Turner, *Diary*, p. 50.
[597] Turner, *Diary*, p. 112.
[598] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 10, 14, 41, 69.

examples of such kindnesses in his own behaviour.[599] He was always willing to draw up a will, cast an account or calculate a building cost but he expected payment in return; it was a rare gesture of goodwill when he pressed his old friend William Higgens to allow him to draw up his will, "I insisted on his doing it for I told him I feared not the pay nor my reward".[600] Rarely he would make a positive intervention; when one of his scholars was removed by his uncle and put apprentice to John Stuard, Cannon was keen to protect the boy's interests and insisted on making the indentures because "This Stuard was one of the most dissembling hypocritical fellows in the town or elsewhere".[601] Edmund Harrold's diary focused mainly on relations, friends and business contacts and gave little attention to neighbours. Given his straitened circumstances and habitual drunkenness, it may be that this was the totality of his social world, with little interaction with his neighbours. Dudley Ryder was similarly, though more positively, wrapped up in his social and familial worlds and had little opportunity to offer those little gestures of support that created a neighbourly community.

With the exception of the plain-living Stout, the diarists all partook in the new forms of socialising that became more available from around the turn of the century. By far the most fashionable was young Dudley Ryder, visiting the local coffeehouses to see friends or to join the conversations of strangers, attending dances or the theatre, visiting Bath Spa or showing young lady friends the sights of London. His activities mainly took the form of socialising rather than obliging, although he occasionally took a less experienced young man under his wing who, despite being "so much beneath me in age and learning", Ryder advised on his studies.[602] Thomas Turner enjoyed more domestic pleasures dining with friends at home or abroad but this was overlaid by the demands of the social round. He felt obliged to engage with the more important citizens of East Hoathly who gathered for regular dinner or card parties.

Most of these occasions were instigated by the rector (Rev Porter) and his wife, usually beginning as an afternoon meal and card game at their house but often becoming a drinking party which sometimes turned riotous and could even collapse into a noisy tour around the village well into the following morning.[603] Turner found these gatherings a trial on several levels. He did not enjoy their vulgarity,

> After supper the old sport went on, such as dancing, pulling off of hats, wigs, caps and shoes etc., with a variety of such-like frantic tricks, but no swearing or ill words, by which reason Mr.

[599] Cannon, *Chronicles*, pp. 99, 149.
[600] Cannon, *Chronicles*, p. 322.
[601] Cannon, *Chronicles*, pp. 362–63.
[602] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 82, 115.
[603] See, for example, Turner, *Diary*, pp. 137–39.

Porter calls it innocent mirth, though I in opinion differ much therefrom, for I think it abounds too much with libertinism to be called innocent.[604]

It could also be expensive since he and his wife routinely lost as much as 5*s.* at cards in an evening and there was a further expectation to tip the servants which could cost another 2*s. 6d*. He also did not greatly enjoy the effects of alcohol and could be adversely affected by just two glasses, a level of consumption unacceptable in this company. Whilst he would often sneak off home early, he nonetheless felt compelled to join in the festivities rather than risk upsetting those whose trade he relied on:

> I must own it grieves me to lose so much money, and especially as I think it wrong, nor would I ever play, was it not upon the account of being sneered at by the company … How tired am I of those more-than-midnight revels; how inconsistent is it with the duty of a tradesman, for how is it possible for him to perform or pursue his business with vigour, industry and pleasure when the body must be disordered by the loss of sleep and perhaps the brain too by the too great a quantity of liquor which is often drunk at those times.[605]

Edmund Harrold was also disturbed by drink. His nightly drinking in the tavern with his three trusted friends often into the small hours and his more serious 'rambles' (drinking bouts that could last several days) seem timeless, the behaviour of a certain type of man through the ages, yet aspects were rather more modern. The tavern was now growing in importance as a place of work where Harrold might meet business associates, the making or sealing of a deal requiring several shared drinks.[606] Like Turner, though rather less successfully, he tried to rein in his drinking and it formed the core theme of many of his discussions with God, but his need to socialise made abstention an impossible challenge. John Cannon was better able to hold his drink and he could consume great quantities in the course of his business since vestry meetings and other business affairs were usually conducted in the taverns. Like Harrold, he was also prone to the occasional ramble and could spend the night in a ditch or the local lock-up. These men faced the quandary that excessive drinking could simultaneously be both required sociable behaviour and yet construed as anti-social behaviour.

There were other social pressures in addition to those associated with entertainment. Though not unduly vain, Ryder occasionally worried about his appearance and behaviour: buying a new sword so that he could look the part at more formal gatherings, worrying which side to hand a lady when walking in the park or discussing dancing etiquette with his friends.[607] He recognised the need

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[604] Turner, *Diary*, p. 141.
[605] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 199–200.
[606] Harrold, *Diary*, *passim* and 2 n.4. There is a long history of the tavern as a space for socialising and business, see Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660', in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure*, ed. by Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 1–27; and Phil Withington, 'Company and Sociability in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 32.3 (2007), 291–307.
[607] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 119, 31, 156.

to conform to polite codes of behaviour, interpreting it in terms of acceptable social manners and conversation rather than a moral code, and noting who was "of polite breeding" or who was "unacquainted with the world and have seen little polite conversation".[608] In the rather more confined world of East Hoathly, Turner had to contend with local gossip - did he hasten his wife's death, did he have amorous intentions towards Sarah Walker or, perhaps, towards Mr Coates' maid?[609] In a close-knit community, reputation for moral probity as well as financial probity was hard-won and easily lost.

The diarists were conscious of these new social codes which demanded participation in neighbourly entertainment and often mimicked the social forms described in fiction and the journals: Ryder read *The Spectator, Tatler* and *Freeholder*, Cannon *The Gentleman's Magazine,* Turner *The Freeholder, Spectator* and *London Magazine* and even Harrold read *The Mercury*, but each also commented on the social and personal costs of social encounters. Nonetheless, the new social norms had become part of their daily round.

Conclusions

This final chapter has stepped into the daily lives of five middling men and considered the extent and limits of their practical obligations. Many of their interactions had a distinctly eighteenth-century flavour deriving from the particular economic, social and religious changes that had taken place, but their concerns and the demands made on them by others were essentially contingent: conditioned by situations, local expectations and the personalities involved. These were very practical men interested in making their way in the world, but the ways that they expressed their thoughts frequently reflected contemporary debates about such concerns as family, marriage, money, religion or socialising. The discourses discussed in Chapter 5 might colour their opinions, but the solutions they found to everyday dilemmas belonged more to the moment than to those wider debates. Whilst the manner of their obliging conduct and the language they employed might reflect new norms, the roots of their obligations lay not in the nature of their time but in the nature of the human condition and are therefore timeless.

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[608] Ryder, *Diary*, pp. 34, 163.
[609] Turner, *Diary*, pp. 230–31, 256–59.

CONCLUSIONS

In Arthur Murphy's highly successful mid-eighteenth-century comedy, *Know Your Own Mind*, the hypocrite Malvil sees obligation as a much-underused attribute:

> There are few who know how to confer an obligation. A disinterested action gives such moments of inward pleasure! Oh! there are moments of the heart, worth all the giddy pleasures of life. One benevolent action pays so amply, and yields such exquisite interest, that I wonder people are not fond of laying out their money in that way.[610]

Despite Malvil's view that contemporaries were surprisingly slow to engage in obliging acts, we have seen ample evidence that many did understand the pleasures and necessities of obligation in oiling the wheels of eighteenth-century sociability. Indeed, we have found that the concept was central to shaping discussion across a broad spectrum of moral and social discourse and this study has been able to bring fresh perspectives to several aspects of eighteenth-century outlooks and conduct through its focus on obliged and obliging behaviour.

It has shed light on a previously unrecognised characteristic of eighteenth-century culture: the pervasive use of the language of obligation in most forms of writing. Chapter 1 showed that this emphasis on obliged and obliging behaviour emerged in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution and reached its peak in usage in the 1750s, declining in the late century. It demonstrated that references to obliged and obliging behaviour appeared more frequently in writing of the period than mentions of most other cultural terms routinely studied by historians, such as family, nation, honour, commerce, or politeness. However, the language of obligation differed from those terms in one important respect: while it was not necessarily the central focus of debate, it frequently provided the means through which other topics could be discussed. It became a moral and social toolkit that grounded those debates around a deep concern about interpersonal relationships.

Obliging terms became a ubiquitous presence in many forms of discourse, whether performing a central role in debates about morality, conduct, and relationships or simply as a mode of speaking that could provide subtle reminders of civility, affinity, or intimacy. Obligation became the preferred term of philosophers and novelists who explored or redefined the moral codes that determined individuals' responsibilities to those around them and to society at large. Essayists employed this language to explore the various roles that people might play as spouses, parents, employers, tradesmen, or members of a group. Obliging terms also captured the essence of the demands and

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[610] Arthur Murphy, *Know Your Own Mind: A Comedy, Performed at the Theatre-Royal, in Covent-Garden.* (London: printed for T. Becket, 1778), p. 120, Historical Texts.

expectations generated by the many new forms of sociable interaction in which individuals found themselves engaged.

These concluding remarks will summarize the findings of the research and speculate about why the language of obligation became so useful to people in early eighteenth-century England. They will also return to the other underlining theme of the thesis: the role of rigour in cultural history.

Senses of obligation

A sense of obligation is an essential part of the human condition and is therefore always with us, making it an ahistorical concept located not in our history but in our humanity. However, how those obligations are defined and the contexts in which they come into play are culturally bound and therefore capable of historical analysis. As we saw in Chapter 6, people in this period were no more or less moral in their conduct than in other historical periods, but they did discuss ethical and social questions in ways that were specific to their time. By focusing on the common language of those debates, it has been possible to show that debates about very varied aspects of moral and social norms were usually expressed in terms of either obliged or obliging behaviour, placing apparently divergent themes within the same discursive space.

Chapter 1 applied the techniques of corpus linguistics to a very large body of eighteenth-century writing to demonstrate that the language of obligation was a unique feature of eighteenth-century discourse. It used these techniques in novel ways, at least as far as historical research is concerned, firstly by employing a large comprehensive and representative corpus rather than select text to introduce a new level of confidence that its findings properly reflect eighteenth-century usage. It has, effectively, used the corpus to conduct an 'opinion poll' of eighteenth-century attitudes to assess, employing a common expression of the time, "the sense of the people".

Secondly, by including all grammatical forms of the language of obligation rather than the more common practice which focuses on noun forms, it has allowed a more sophisticated analysis to be included in Chapter 2 to demonstrate that the language of obligation contained complex grammars and nuanced meanings that are not apparent from reading individual texts. This language often served a normative function to communicate expectations regarding behaviours and attitudes, but its uses extended well beyond mere normativity. It played a crucial role in establishing a vocabulary through which various emerging ideas about relationships could be discussed, each aspect sharing a common theme of the bonds that tied people to each other and to wider society. Thus, this new

language appears to have acted as a marker for an underlying cultural change which privileged inter-dependence and social accommodation.

Chapter 3 explored how eighteenth-century moral philosophers sought to develop a new language to explain ethical behaviour, developing a moral outlook that gave increased agency to individuals who no longer functioned as subjects of divine or regal injunction but made ethical decisions based on their human instincts. These thinkers argued that morality is an innate human quality that manifests itself through feelings of duty: the sensation one experiences when dealing with a moral dilemma. They were less concerned to discuss universal values such as those represented in the Ten Commandments, instead exploring the feelings associated with common forms of duty, which they brought together in the concept of obligation, devoting much of their effort to explaining its origins as part of the human condition. As the discussion developed across the eighteenth century, the initial expression of personal obligation as a prime duty to one's immediate associates (such as kith and kin) was extended to larger and larger groups. By the 1760s Adam Smith was arguing that we have an over-arching obligation to that "great society of all sensible and intelligent beings", extending the idea of social obligation into the community, the nation and mankind everywhere.

Whilst thinkers were discussing the origins and nature of obligation, other writers explored its practical implications. Chapter 4 demonstrated that print material became widely accessible to a broad cross-section of English society and Chapter 5 considered its treatment of obligation. Guidance literature both in essay form and in the new journals became widely read from the early century, providing practical advice on such topics as household management, relationships and the conduct of business. They emphasised people's responsibilities within the different roles that they played and provided guidance about one's obligations as master, servant, spouse, parent or tradesman, reminding readers both of their wider duties towards others and the impacts that their own actions could have on others' well-being.

Personal and social responsibility became central to fictional works and authors began to focus on the moral dilemmas of everyday life which were again expressed through the language of obligation, a common theme being the conflict between self-interest and moral or social duty. Of increasing interest were the challenges of navigating social interactions whether at home, in the coffeehouse or social events, as well as conducting oneself in less intimate settings such as assemblies or in the course of business, and these all became a regular feature of the essay journals. Those concerns were also mirrored in social writing explored, for example, in letters, commercial transactions and book dedications where great emphasis was placed on the interdependence

between the writer and reader or patron. All these debates were couched in terms either of social obligation (the need to *oblige*) or complaisance, the wish to please others and to be *obliging*, a much-valued term of approbation.

This study has also explored how the discourses of obligation began to extend beyond one's circle of acquaintances and towards the community at large. This was reflective of changing conceptions of society itself. We have seen how *society* as a term was initially interpreted as the interests of the better sort, but its use broadened to give expression to ideas of the common good and of the public interest, so that both the terms *society* and *the public* became much more frequently used by mid-century to discuss the obligations either that individuals had towards the collective or that the collective had towards its members. This was not simply a question of linguistic fashion, a new way of expressing old ideas, but the beginnings of a debate about the existence and nature of society itself - about the responsibilities associated with community. Whilst the birth of 'civil society' as a political entity in the eighteenth century has been discussed by historians in recent years, this study demonstrates that an alternative conception of society as a *cultural* entity was also emerging, a finding that has been largely overlooked by scholars but deserves closer attention.

Chapter 6 finally considered the practical implications of these debates and found that both obliged and obliging factors featured in the lives of middling people. Whilst sociable considerations became increasingly important, other dilemmas of life were in essence little different from those of previous and future generations even though the language in which they were expressed, that of obligation, was a product of its time.

Rigour in cultural history

This research began with a concern about the need for rigour in synoptic forms of cultural history. The common practice of using a limited range of chosen texts to highlight attitudes or behaviours can inadvertently lead to distortion and the risk of selection bias unless care has been taken to ensure that the sample sources being used are properly representative. A second issue arises when historical uses of language terms become central to assessing attitudes and behaviours because we have to be sure that those terms had the historical meaning and significance that are being ascribed to them. This thesis has explored a different approach to cultural history by facing questions of representativeness and meaning from the outset to develop a range of techniques that allow for a form of rigorous cultural history, one which adopts a mode of scepticism where the researcher assumes that the methods used are vulnerable to criticism and so need to be questioned at each stage, what I have termed a 'scepticism as to method'. This has meant that each time that

a historical term was explored its common historical meaning in the eighteenth century was tested against a sample whose representativeness has been verified. Variations of meaning and use in different contexts and in different genres have been explicitly explored and the sources and methodologies explained so that another researcher would be able to replicate the study.

Concepts of rigour problematise the historical method, forcing the researcher to continually evaluate his or her approach. This entails assessing sources to ensure they are representative of wider society, or of groups, within it and questioning whether the historical objects under consideration (language terms, material objects, visual representations) had the significance to historical actors being suggested. It requires the researcher to check conclusions by comparing them with results from other sources, and finally to demonstrate that those conclusions are historically contingent, that the claimed feature was both specific to that period and substantive, arising from historical tendencies rather than from simply chance or fashion.

Because this thesis focuses on language terms, it has used linguistic methods. Whilst the approach has broader implications, this study acts as a proof of concept, demonstrating that we can quantify cultural history without destroying meaning and then use the generated data to establish with greater certainty how people in the past used and understood cultural terms. These approaches thus provide a solid foundation for interpretive research. In this study they have allowed me to establish the frequency of key terms and compare them with similar concepts in the same time frame and also with uses in other time frames, showing definitively that the language of obligation was an exceptional feature of the early eighteenth century. By exploring the range of meanings and usages of this language, I have revealed both diversities and similarities, allowing apparently separate ideas to be considered within the same conceptual frame. These usages were then viewed through the lenses of intellectual, cultural, and social history to unravel the wider trends that those linguistic practices represented. By using such methods, I have been able to bring a higher degree of confidence to my research findings and provide a surer footing for my conclusions.

This spirit of scepticism has extended throughout the research so that, for example, whenever tendencies have been used to make more general statements (n*ovelists emphasised …, little discussed by historians …)* such statements have been verified by exploring the relevant databases and, where important to do so, the details have been given in the text. Most of these databases are commonly available to academic audiences and the methods used have been explained in sufficient detail for another researcher to repeat the work and be able to verify the claims made.

Potential areas for further research

This thesis has opened up several areas that would benefit from further exploration. Firstly, there are two eighteenth-century concepts, *politeness* and popular understandings of *society*, where the initial evaluations carried out in this research suggest that there is a great deal more to learn about attitudes in this period, so both ideas would benefit from a full-length study along the lines used in this thesis. In the case of politeness, it would be useful to understand the idea as an eighteenth-century trope but also trace its development as a twenty-first-century paradigm. More generally, the methods used in this study have proved sufficiently robust that they could valuably be applied in other cultural studies, either as a central approach or simply as a preliminary exercise to ensure that subsequent interpretations have a firm foundation.

Historians of the eighteenth century are fortunate to have available to them a corpus of prepared works (ECCO-TCP) which allows them to test out hypotheses concerning changing ideas and usages. It is therefore somewhat surprising that this tool has attracted so little critical attention given that there is no comparable general reference corpus of substantial size for any other period before the late twentieth century. Despite its haphazard genesis, I have been able to show that the corpus is reasonably representative of eighteenth-century writing in general, at least when used for the types of concept studied in this thesis. Given the potential value of the corpus, it would take relatively little effort to transform it into a fully representative, balanced and sizable corpus.

There is also another story to be told concerning the demise of the language of obligation from the late eighteenth century onwards. Such an account might discuss the reception of Adam Smith's later work *The Wealth of Nations*, reactions to the American and French Revolutions, changing attitudes toward the poor, and the retreat into private life. It might potentially document an incomplete triumph of the integrity of the individual over intimacy between individuals.[611]

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[611] A very insightful distinction made by Thomas Kasulis in his *Intimacy or Integrity*, pp. 24–25.

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