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Special issue: Propaganda Through the Ages.
Studies in Honour of Nicholas Brownlees

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FOREWORD

This special issue celebrates Professor Nicholas Brownlees on the occasion of his retirement, recognizing his extensive and impactful contributions to the academic world over many years. The collection of articles, authored by his friends and colleagues, explores the theme of propaganda from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, analysing various text-types and employing methodologies that have significantly influenced Nicholas's scholarly work.

Born in Auckland, New Zealand, Nicholas Brownlees obtained a BA in Jurisprudence from the University of Oxford in 1974; his degree was later promoted to MA. However, life took an unexpected turn, and soon after completing his studies, Nicholas left Oxford for Italy. In 1978, he became a Language Assistant in English at the University of Florence, later moving to the University of Pisa. Nicholas's academic career progressed steadily, and after being appointed Researcher of English Language and Translation at the University of Florence, he became Associate Professor in 2001 and then Full Professor. Throughout his tenure, he held key administrative positions, including President of the Degree Course in Humanistic Sciences for Communication, Head of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies, and Deputy Head of the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures, and Psychology.

His intellectual endeavours encompassed several areas of study, including historical pragmatics, translation, and language teaching. In the field of historical pragmatics, his research was characterized by a deep and long-standing dedication to historical news discourse and the history of the English language. He analysed a wide variety of text types traditionally associated with the domain of news and advertising, and provided valuable insights into the translation practices of foreign printed texts in 17th- and 18th-century Britain. His list of publications is impressive and continues to grow. Among his most notable scholarly works are two groundbreaking monographs in the field of early modern news discourse: the first, *Corantos and Newsbooks: Language and Discourse in the First English Newspapers (1620-1641)*, published in 1999, and the second, *The Language of Periodical News*

in *Seventeenth-Century England*, initially published in 2011 with a second edition released in 2014. His significant contributions to the study of early and late modern news culminated in his editorship of the first volume of the prestigious *Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press*, titled *Beginnings and Consolidation, 1640-1800*, published in 2023.

Nicholas was also deeply engaged in the field of corpus linguistics, which allowed him to merge his interests in the language of the news with advances in information technology. The outcome was the creation of the *Florence Early English Newspapers Corpus* (FEEN), a machine-readable corpus of early modern news texts (1620-1649) which has since become a widely used reference corpus in numerous influential studies on the history of the English language.

Nicholas's indefatigable updating and upgrading of his approach to the exploration of news production and reception is documented by the several research projects financed by the Italian Ministry for University and Research that he coordinated for the University of Florence since 2010 and by the numerous international conferences, symposia and seminars that he organized. One of his scholarly initiatives that particularly deserves mention is the *Historical News Discourse* (CHINED) conference series, which Nicholas founded in Florence in 2004 and on which he continues to serve as a board member. CHINED conferences have been held regularly across Europe ever since, bringing together researchers from around the world, fostering profitable discussion, and providing invaluable material for important volumes on historical news text-types written in the English language.

Nicholas Brownlees's distinguished academic profile is further shown by his active involvement in international research institutions such as the Medici Archive Project and the International Studies Institute of Florence, and by his extensive experience as a visiting professor at numerous prestigious universities worldwide. In addition to his work in Italy, he has been invited to deliver lectures at several renowned institutions, including Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland), the University of Mainz (Germany, European Society for the Study of English Conference in 2022), the University of Minho (Braga, Portugal), Kansai University (Osaka, Japan), Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona, Spain), the University of Rostock (Germany), Yonsei University (Seoul, South Korea), and the University of Zurich (Switzerland).

Working with him as collaborators has been an invaluable experience. The years we spent together allowed us to learn immensely from his expertise, dedication, and deep understanding of the academic world.

With his boundless patience, strong sense of duty, and fairness to others, Nicholas has been an essential point of reference for all of us. His approach to the many challenges university life poses has been practical, positive, and solution-oriented, always inclusive of a Plan B in any situation. He has been tireless in offering support to those in need – from students to colleagues – demonstrating an unparalleled generosity in his academic guidance. Last but not least, Nicholas has been an exceptional team builder, capable of making everyone feel like an integral part of the whole. His unmatched British humour has added great value, enabling him to ease the atmosphere and turn even the most tedious meetings into occasions of conviviality. We are truly honoured to have had him as a mentor, and we will remain forever grateful for the precious lessons he has given us over the years.

His extensive and insightful research has been a source of inspiration not only for scholars working on the diachronic aspects of the English language but also for those approaching the language from a synchronic perspective, as the present collection of articles shows.

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* Professor Martin Conboy will be remembered for his sharp intellect and unwavering passion for expanding our comprehension of the role of journalism within society. Many scholars in the field have greatly benefited from his mentorship, guidance, and support. His legacy will continue to inspire well after his untimely demise.

Introduction¹

Elisabetta Cecconi, Christina Samson and Isabella Martini

University of Florence

The decision to structure this special issue around the concept of propaganda from past to present is a tribute to Nicholas Brownlees's life-long research in historical news discourse and in the history of English language. His work – including the publications stemming from the CHINED conferences that he initiated in Florence in 2004 (now in their 10th edition), the edited volumes resulting from the National PRIN projects that he coordinated, and the conferences and workshops that he organized in collaboration with the Medici Archive Project and International Studies Institute of Florence – has been a vital source of inspiration for the topics and methodologies presented in this collection of articles. Some of the aspects which characterised Nicholas's research and which informed the contributors' understanding of propaganda are the focus on producers and consumers of texts, the notion of public sphere, the role of context, the presentation and structuring of discourse, news management and control of the information, naming policy, rhetorical strategies for argumentation and forms of news / knowledge transmission and dissemination. The methodologies and approaches adopted are also reflective of Nicholas Brownlees's interest in (critical) discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse studies, historical pragmatics, digital humanities and multimodality.

The present volume stretches from the Middle Ages to the 21st century and encompasses a wide range of text types including poems, pamphlets, dictionaries, biographies, interviews, as well as print and online newspapers. The broad temporal scope helps shed light on aspects

¹ Although the authors worked closely on the preparation of the Introduction, Elisabetta Cecconi is responsible for Sections 1 and 2, Christina Samson for Section 3, and Isabella Martini for Sections 4 and 5.

of continuity and change in the management and control of information in relation to two major variables: the historical and socio-cultural context of text production and reception and important technological innovations, particularly the advent of print first and of the internet closer to our times. This introduction intends to provide an overview of the major forms of propaganda across different historical periods focusing on the text types exploited as vehicles for persuading the masses on crucial religious, political and social issues.

1. Propaganda in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, propaganda was primarily driven by religious and monarchical institutions which used symbols, rituals, and a variety of text types meant to guide and control public opinion. Not unlike in modernity, the medieval notion of the public was not static, but dynamic, as the *populus*, the people, involved a broad cross-section of society. Since efforts to elicit consensus over a political or a religious cause were aimed at both clergy and laity, elite and non-elite, it is very likely that a clear distinction was not always made by medieval communicators (Connell 2016). Even so, authors knew that the same objective could not always be obtained with the same text type and by using the same language: that is why they exploited different forms of propaganda and adapted their choice of language – Latin or vernacular – to their construction of the desired “public” depending on what the situation required.

Propaganda played a crucial role both in the process of secular state-building and in the papacy’s efforts to establish a central papal monarchy through campaigns against heresy and for crusades. In his analysis of 14th-century text types, Aberth (2001) provides an interpretation of medieval propaganda which recalls van Dijk’s ideological square principle of modern-day political discourse (van Dijk 1998). He notices that during the Hundred Years’ War what made Englishmen and Frenchmen more willing to kill each other was the propaganda disseminated on both sides:

to glorify one’s own cause by imbuing it with an almost mystical, religious aura and, at the same time, demonize one’s enemies by depicting them as motivated almost entirely by malice and evil. This was the essence of the new nationalism: to suffer and deal out death in the name of a country or a sovereign who can do no wrong, against a dehumanized enemy who is never in the right (Aberth 2001: 70).

While a univocal definition of the nature of propaganda in the Middle Ages has not been achieved yet, greater attention has been drawn to the rhetorical means and the textual forms through which propaganda was conveyed. During the Hundred Years' War, at the highest level propaganda assumed the form of an appeal to chivalry in epic poetry and for most Englishmen and Europeans chivalry was a synonym for King Arthur. The Arthurian legend was therefore widely manipulated by English monarchs, including Edward I and Edward III, to legitimize their political ambitions before the aristocratic community. Several poems (such as *Morte Arthure*, *Le Morte Arthur* and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*) were written under inspiration of the Arthurian legend in the 14th and 15th centuries. By comparing himself to Arthur, the English monarch took on some of the chivalry's quasi-religious overtones of the hero, laying the foundation for the concept of divine right as the cornerstone of incipient absolutism (Aberth 2010: 71).

A large number of poems merged chivalry with religion reflecting the central role of Christianity in the Middle Ages. They exploited biblical stories, lives of saints, or experiences of Christian pilgrimage and salvation in order to promote the process of Christianization of England and purification from the sins of paganism. A case in point is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Written by an anonymous 14th-century poet, the poem is a chivalric romance that blends elements of adventure, morality and Christian symbolism, set against the backdrop of the Arthurian legend (Burrow 2008).

Several other text types were employed to shape political narratives and promote religious or secular agendas. In some cases, features of different text types co-existed in one single work, making it challenging to classify the genre in a straightforward manner (Thompson 2001: 391). Hagiographies, chronicles, sermons and treatises were among the most popular forms of propaganda. Hagiographies recounted the lives of saints but, far from being just a devotional or biographical text type, they acted as powerful tools of propaganda. They often depicted saints as individuals who had been divinely chosen and who acted as intermediaries between God and humans. Their circulation helped to reinforce the legitimacy of the Catholic Church, monarchs and local rulers who claimed divine favour. Hagiographies were also written to serve as *moral exempla* for the medieval audience. As Cubitt (2000: 37) observes, the power of hagiographical texts to affect behaviour lay in the role of the saints as exemplary types which demanded that their audience consciously internalize the models put before them. In addition, hagiographies were exploited to promote regional or national identities by elevating local saints to the status of religious icons (Turpie 2015). Saints

associated with particular places or regions became symbols of local pride, and their cults could be used to foster unity or resistance to outside powers.

Just like hagiographies, chronicles used the politics of memory to serve the propaganda purposes of the Church and the State (Cubitt 2000) as well as to foster national identities (Higgins 2015). By emphasizing certain events, battles or rulers, authors could control how the past was remembered and interpreted. In times of political upheaval or crisis, chronicles could be used to either justify the actions of a new ruler or discredit the legitimacy of a fallen dynasty. Medieval chronicles also contributed to the development of national identities by framing historical narratives in ways that emphasized ethnic unity and independence. A case in point is Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*. Written in the early 14th century by a Scottish historian and priest, the chronicle fostered a sense of Scottish exceptionalism and resistance to English rule which would be very influential in later Scottish historical writing.

Another widely circulated propaganda text type was the sermon. Sermons were one of the most direct and widespread forms of mass persuasion used by clerics both in the cathedral and in the marketplace to influence the behaviour and beliefs of the laity, often aligning religious duties with political allegiance or promoting papal authority. Although Kienzle (2002) characterizes this text type as primarily an oral discourse, delivered by a preacher to instruct and exhort an audience on matters of faith and morality, sermons were often written before they were delivered or encapsulated afterwards and made available for reading. Even before the advent of print, copies of model sermons for reading circulated thanks to the relentless scribal activity of monasteries (Connell 2016).

In medieval England, the political landscape was shaped by continuous tensions between the monarchy, the nobility and the church. In this context, political tracts were employed to justify, challenge or explain the nature of power and authority. One of the earliest and most significant examples of this text type is the *Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England*, often attributed to Henry de Bracton (c. 1210-1268). Bracton's work provides a theoretical framework for English kingship that emphasized the monarch's role as the ultimate lawgiver, whose authority was derived from both divine right and the common law of the land (Jansen 2016). As English society became increasingly embroiled in civil wars and internal conflict in the 14th and 15th centuries, political treatises took on a more direct propaganda role, particularly as a means of both legitimating rulers and criticizing the power structures of their time.

2. Propaganda in the Early Modern period

The invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century revolutionized communication and the spread of ideas. Alongside established text types like sermons, biographies and chronicles, new forms of cheap print emerged that became powerful tools for propagandists. The emergence of print culture enabled ideas to spread rapidly and broadly, reaching a much larger audience than ever before, and gradually erasing the distinction between the élite and the common people (Zaret 2000; Sharpe – Zwicker 2003; Raymond 2011). This expansion of propaganda consumption was facilitated by rising literacy rates, a shift towards the use of vernacular languages, and the development of a postal system that made it easier to distribute information from place to place among various audiences. Although the notion of contemporaneity differed from our modern-day understanding of experiencing a particular event at more or less the same time, it was in the 16th and 17th centuries that “people began to formulate in their minds a concept of the world shared with others, within the same time and space, and within a basically secular context” (Dooley 2010: 2).

The Early Modern period was a time of intense religious and political conflict, and propaganda played a central role in justifying both religious reforms and political upheaval. Key events like the Protestant Reformation, the colonial expansion in the New World, the Thirty Years’ War, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, and the rise of Enlightenment thought were all accompanied by powerful propaganda campaigns which took shape in a variety of print media. To shape public opinion and gain support for specific policies, various rhetorical strategies were employed, ranging from *ad locum* animadversion to ventriloquism, from omission to fabrication of news, and from irony and sarcasm to naming policies for representing in-groups and out-groups (Peacey 2004; Brownlees 2006; Suhr 2021). The persuasive power of these strategies was evident in broadside ballads, pamphlets and newspapers – three key text types that dominated the Early Modern print market and helped form influential moral and political communities of readers.

Broadside ballads were a form of cheap print which had populated the print market since the 16th century (Würzbach 1990; Watt 1991). As objects of mass consumption, they wielded a powerful influence that political and religious authorities could not afford to ignore. Printed on a single sheet of paper, typically accompanied by a woodcut illustration and a catchy tune, broadside ballads blended poetry, music and drama. They addressed

a wide range of social and cultural issues, drawing from traditional folk themes, legends, tales of love, crime, monstrous births, natural disasters and significant historical events. This broad thematic variety made them a powerful vehicle for political and nationalist messages, inheriting the appeal of mediaeval poems and romances.

From the 1580s the prose pamphlet became the most common medium to convey news and spread propaganda (Claridge 2000; Raymond 2003). Pamphlets were short quarto books typically consisting of between one and twelve sheets. They were swift to produce and relatively cheap to purchase also thanks to the smaller size and poorer quality of the paper and ink. Several factors contributed to their commercial success: 1) their accessibility, as pamphlets were cheap to produce and widely accessible to both the educated élite and common people; 2) their brevity and simplicity, since they were typically short and to the point, 3) their visual rhetoric exemplified in the use of images and illustrations to support arguments; 4) their polarization and partisanship, since pamphlets were deeply situated, reflecting the political and religious conflicts of the time and 5) their emotional appeal, as they were designed to evoke strong emotional responses, ranging from anger and anxiety to confidence and optimism.

Pamphlets were exploited to inflame the people's hearts during political and religious upheaval, to advocate for the Protestant reformation of morals and to promote colonial expansion with overly optimistic and deliberately distorted accounts of the occupation of new territories and life in the new settlements (Peacey 2004; Brownlees 2011: 1-24; Cecconi 2020, 2023). Despite its reputation for spreading misinformation and calumnies, this text type was extensively consumed, shared and passed on by people of diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds (Raymond 2003). Thanks to a surge in literacy, pamphlets could be read by tradesmen, merchants, manufacturers, skilled craftsmen, farmers, artisans and apprentices (Suhr 2011). Even the illiterate could approach their content simply by having a printed copy read by a neighbour, an apprentice or a clergyman (Fox 2000; Walsham 1999). Barbers too could provide a complimentary news reading service for their customers. Their shops acted as centres of news circulation and places where newsletters or pamphlets might be seen. Later on in the century, coffee houses offered a tremendous supplement to the reading services of barbers, as the coffee master himself and any of his customers would have been ready readers of a pamphlet (Fox 2000: 39).

The 17th century also marked the emergence of newspapers, with several key developments that helped the genre evolve into a powerful tool

for propaganda. A pivotal moment came in 1641 with the lapse of censorship in England, which triggered an unprecedented surge in printed news. This period saw significant experimentation among authors, publishers and pamphleteers, who began to report on domestic affairs. During the English Civil War, periodical pamphlets known as *newsbooks* entered the print market, laying the groundwork for the development of early newspapers. Newsbooks were published weekly and consisted of four or eight pages, which were sold for one or two pennies (Greenspan 2023). Both royalists and parliamentarians leveraged these publications to promote their own political agendas, recounting victories and defeats from their respective ideological standpoints, in order to rally support and sway public opinion (Peacey 2004; Brownlees 2006, 2011; Greenspan 2023: 474-475). According to Raymond, the 1640s saw the press emerge as an arena for propagandistic conflict, stimulating public debate and engagement. This led him to hypothesize that the public sphere, as originally described by Habermas, may have emerged earlier than the 1670s or 1680s – potentially even before the Civil Wars (Raymond 1999: 114). The republican governments sought to manage the transmission of information and its content by minimising royalist and other potentially critical newspapers and maximising the spread of news favourable to the Commonwealth and Protectorate regimes. This control of information implied suppression or distortion of news in case of governmental failures, as was the case with the fiasco of Cromwell’s Western Design in 1655 (Greenspan 2023).

After the Restoration in 1660, partisan newsbooks gave way to the *London Gazette*, which became the official government newspaper. Its primary role was to disseminate official news and ensure the public’s alignment with the Crown’s interests. This marked the beginning of a system of state-controlled or state-regulated news dissemination, setting a precedent for future government-backed publications.

By the end of the 17th century newspapers started to experiment with running ads alongside news content (Brownlees 2017). These early ads were simple, text-based, and typically included brief descriptions of products or services, often followed by contact details or information on where to purchase them. Advertisements ranged from book and job listings to promotions for medicines and treatments offered by apothecaries and doctors. The century also witnessed the foundation of the first English scientific journal, *The Philosophical Transactions*, under the auspices of the Royal Society in 1665. The journal reported on letters between scientists as well as accounts of discoveries, experiments and observations in various

scientific fields. Book reviews and book announcements, sometimes verging on advertisements, were common text types in scientific periodicals and reflected the new spirit of consumerism that was emerging in society (Taavitsainen 2021).

The first half of the 18th century recorded an explosion in the number of newspapers and periodicals, partly due to the rise of literacy and the increasing commercialization of the press. The demand for news spurred the creation of titles reporting on crucial political and military events such as the Glorious Revolution and the Jacobite uprisings (Greenspan 2023: 488). Newspapers became an arena of discourses and counter-discourses, while advertisements became more varied, shifting from basic product promotions to broader categories such as public events, entertainment, services and patent medicines (Gotti 2005; Brownlees 2017).

Other text types which were harnessed as vehicles for the classification of knowledge and dissemination of information in the Early Modern period were dictionaries and encyclopaedias (Iamartino 2018, 2020; Lonati 2020). The relationship between propaganda and the above text types was a nuanced one, reflecting how intellectual works – particularly those that aimed to organize and disseminate knowledge – were often influenced by political, social and cultural agendas. In an era of intense political upheaval, scientific discovery and philosophical advancement, these publications were not merely neutral collections of facts and definitions, but were shaped by specific ideological and socio-political perspectives, contributing to the promotion of certain views and the marginalization of others.

3. Propaganda in the Late Modern period

In the 19th century the expansion of literacy and advances in printing technology during the industrial revolution led to an increase of the press serving as a powerful tool for governments, political movements and prominent figures to influence public attitudes, perceptions and promote agendas (Lippmann 1922). Furthermore, the numerous education acts meant that an entire generation of Britons had grown up under a system of compulsory education and was then satiated by the rise of a cheap mass press, which had itself been facilitated by the erosion of taxes on knowledge throughout the century (Hewitt 2014; Sumpter 2006). During this period, the flourishing of new newspapers was joined by illustrated journals, photography, music halls, modernised forms of art and caricature,

advertising and commercial ephemera all providing a far wider range of tools for propagandists.

Moreover, technological developments were found in the expansion of railways, steamships and towards the end of the century wireless telegraphy, all of which increased the mobility of both people and information around the world (Samson 2022). Three reform acts eventually led to an increase in the electorate to nearly two thirds of the adult male population, including for the first time coal miners and agricultural labourers, that produced a situation in which politicians could gain popularity by influencing the public opinion.

At the time, debates raged in Britain as to the beneficial or malignant nature of public opinion, since it had been recognised as a motivating force in British politics which intensified in the second half of the 19th century. Lippmann, for instance, expressed his doubts regarding the existence of authentic public opinion:

Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behaviour of other human beings, in so far as that behaviour crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us, we call roughly public affairs. The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinions. Those pictures which are acted upon by groups of people, or by individuals acting in the name of groups, are Public Opinion with capital letters (Lippmann 1922: 29).

Such a view was also shared by those who were well informed and interested in public affairs, since, as Lippmann (1922: 154) claimed, only “omnicompetent citizens” could develop an authentic public opinion capable of directing the course of government. This was a theory that could only fit the needs of very small communities, but was completely inadequate for great democracies and larger states, therefore it was seen as a myth (Regalzi 2012).

With this came the unsettling idea that groups and individuals, inside and outside Parliament, could and were able to manipulate public opinion for their own benefit, and it was this issue that led to phrases like the “manufacture of public opinion” which appeared frequently in the works of theorists, journalists and other authors in late 19th-century Britain (Hobson 2016). However, as the electorate increased rapidly, the question that detained many theorists was how such mass opinion should be controlled.

As a consequence, news discourse began to adopt a more standardised linguistic style which was characterised by a veneer of objectivity that often concealed subtle forms of propaganda.

The term propaganda was not commonly used in this period, even though its functions – promoting certain political, social and ideological goals – were clearly present in newspapers, pamphlets and other printed materials. The term had acquired not only an educational connotation but also the function of forming public opinion by shaping the public's perceptions through the use of persuasive communication (Samson 2025). O'Donnell and Kable (1982: 9) define persuasion as a communicative process to influence others:

A persuasive message has a point of view or desired behaviour for the recipient to adopt in a voluntary fashion. Persuasion is a complex, continuing, interactive process in which a sender and a receiver are linked by symbols, verbal and nonverbal, through which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behaviour because the persuadee has had perceptions enlarged or changed (O'Donnell – Kable 1982: 9).

Moreover, Schiappa (2003) argues that words are always persuasive because they carry with them a whole system of values, and the use of a word is always an implicit argument to attain certain goals by means of the system of evaluation that the definition of the word defends.

Newspapers, therefore, played a pivotal role not only in informing but also in persuading readers to believe the content of the narrations within, as in the case of justifying colonial expansion and imperial dominance. For instance, colonies were depicted as uncivilised or savage, thus positioning British rule as a civilising mission and, consequently, portraying colonial conquests as heroic endeavours which emphasised the benevolent nature of imperialism while downplaying or ignoring the negative impacts of colonisation on indigenous populations (Wagner 2018). More specifically, during conflicts such as the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Indian uprisings (1857-1858), the press played a significant role in fostering nationalism and supporting military efforts. Newspapers would often sensationalise enemy atrocities or exaggerate the heroism of British forces, in order to promote a sense of unity and pride among the British public by publishing private letters which generated emotive reactions in readers.

Letters are considered private when two parties are involved and reciprocal communication is not to be divulged, but in the case of private letters contextualising conflicts in the press, the private communicative context undergoes a re-contextualisation of space, place and emotions (Samson 2025). The events are discursively represented within social practices that regulate collective interaction in what can be termed a multi-layered context. The concept, drawing on Pahta and Taavitsainen (2010), involves both textual contexts and socio-historical conditions of text production with its societal, situational, historical, ideological and material sides including the writers' and readers' language attitudes and their social and situational context.

In turning from private into public, letters have, consequently, been directly connected to a wider sense of public engagement and have frequently been published when news took long to reach England from the colonies, acquiring therefore a referential-expressive function (Samson 2022). This has led to a view of letters which appeared as personal communication in the press as actually carefully crafted and curated products of editorial processes, or according to Wahl-Jorgensen (2002), construed through the co-creation of news workers and letter writers. As such, letters turn from unmediated into highly mediated texts through journalistic routines, including those of editorial selectivity (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002; Gregory – Hutchins 2004). The latter privileged letters that related to content already on the news agenda and were therefore “moulded” to fit journalistic criteria, given their public significance (Brownlees et al. 2010) and their importance as gauges of public opinion and as the conduit for many editorially orchestrated campaigns (Conboy 2010).

As a matter of fact, letters can have several purposes. On the one hand, as in the case of conflicts, they morally orient readers with the newspaper's editorial position, while serving as a space for a variety of opinions and revealing glimpses of how ordinary people made sense of major events and crises unfolding around them (Jones 2016). This positioned readers' letters as a manifestation of pre-existing conversations already occurring elsewhere, a view shared by mid-Victorian editors. As Hampton (2004) argues, an ideal of politics by public discussion on the questions of the day permeated mid-Victorian elite society and the model of the rationally debating citizen was central in the creation of discourses of journalism in the early nineteenth century (Chalaby 1998; Wahl-Jorgensen 2007), leading to journalism of representation (Hampton 2004) with a strong social and political impact. On the other hand, epistolary narratives helped to contextualise the conflicts

through reciprocal productions of place (Caquard 2011). The orientation elements in letters published in the press connected writers and readers (Herman 2001), while helping to express human experience and lived space, since narrative itself can be a “spatially symbolic act” (Tally 2011) and (re)orientation can be managed and achieved in or through more or less emotive narratives which enhanced a sense of nationalism and imperialism.

Furthermore, letters to the editor contributed to the transformation of pronunciation into a “status emblem”. This process was not simply top-down, as letters to the editor offered a participatory space in which ordinary readers voiced their views, debated authoritative claims, and helped draw the boundaries of acceptability and deviance in speech. The effort to define and defend “proper” pronunciation spanned throughout the 19th century, a period marked not only by the codification of linguistic norms, but also by their ongoing negotiation, enforcement, and contestation in the pages of the press. Pronunciation debates became not only reflections of linguistic change, but active sites for the construction and contestation of social identity, as accent became a shorthand for broader concerns about class, morality, respectability and national belonging.

The 19th century was also characterised by an explosion of periodicals. In the early Victorian period these were mostly expensive highbrow quarterlies and monthly reviews such as *The Quarterly Review*, *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Westminster Review*, which were all aimed at educated and well-to-do readers. However, also a range of cheap, usually poorly printed “penny dreadfuls” and sensational magazines flourished and were bought by the poor (Boardman 2006). By contrast, in the mid-Victorian period the growth of the middle classes led to the creation of a wide range of periodicals aimed at a family readership, such as *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, Charles Dickens’s *Household Words*, and more stylishly printed journals such as *The Cornhill* and *Once a Week*. Later in the century, the market for magazines was huge and multiform and periodicals included photographic illustrations.

While targeting new readerships, especially women, periodicals functioned as a crucial platform for shaping public opinion by disseminating information and fostering cultural and social change by taking various forms, ranging from subtle reinforcement of societal expectations to overt promotion of feminist ideals. Periodicals like the *English Woman’s Journal* and *The Women’s Penny Paper* actively championed women’s rights and education, while magazines such as Tonna’s *Christian Lady’s Magazine* and Eliza Cook’s *Journal* often downplayed the need for significant change (DiCenzo 2010)

by focusing on domestic skills, fashion and the traditional roles of women in the home. These magazines often used idealised portrayals of women as wives and mothers, reinforcing the “Angel in the House” archetype role of Victorian women. Others that did not explicitly advocate for radical change could, nevertheless, include subtle persuasion through the portrayal of women’s roles and experiences. For example, an article might discuss the importance of education while implying that women should also be able to pursue careers outside the home.

Periodicals which were instead associated with the feminist movement, like the *English Woman’s Journal*, actively promoted women’s education, employment and suffrage, as they featured articles, essays and even fictional narratives that challenged the status quo and advocated for greater equality. While feminist or campaign-based publications often defined their relationship with the established press in antagonistic terms, they nevertheless seized on favourable coverage as a measure of the efficacy of their work. This tension (between criticism and validation) underscores the degree of influence “the Press” was credited with having, even though its very status and reliability as a gauge of public opinion had been under attack since the early decades of the century (Hampton 2004). By exposing distortions and omissions in the press, feminist journals encouraged a critical perspective on current sources of news and information and, in doing so, they were also redefining who constituted the public and what it needed to know. For example, some periodicals particularly focused on the suffrage movement used imagery and cartoons to convey their message, whereas opponents used caricatures to mock suffragists. Supporters, on the other hand, used illustrations to portray women as capable and deserving of the vote.

In the late 19th century, a shift in perspective emerged with the rise of the “New Woman” that implied cigarette-smoking, bicycle-riding and trouser-wearing. This movement challenged traditional gender roles and explored the complexities of women’s lives and desires, often criticising the constraints of the “Angel in the House” ideology while advocating reforms which meant women could enter university and retain property, while improving their intellectual and economic positions (DiCenzo 2004). Women’s advancement was also covered by the influential *Women’s Penny Paper* that was committed to broad coverage of general and specific English and foreign news. These periodicals served as a battleground for competing ideologies about women’s roles and rights and their persuasive discourses, both overt and subtle, reveal the complexities and nuances of Victorian society’s evolving views on women.

Included in such complexity was also the idea that Britain had to civilise the world as well as increase moral development and commercial improvement, all ideas that were underscored by an outburst of biographical production. Biographies served multiple purposes while reflecting evolving societal values and literary trends which often aimed to provide moral guidance by portraying exemplary lives. A case in point are publisher biographies which reconciled the values of literature and commerce, as they configured the reforms spearheaded by booksellers, not as self-serving manoeuvres for or against protectionism, but as a civilising force and a democratisation of literacy, knowledge and taste (Broughton 2020). Such works highlighted virtues like diligence, piety and integrity, offering readers models for personal conduct. This approach aligned with the era's educational literature, reinforcing societal norms and values, aiming to locate the single most motivational value of a subject. In other words, such biographies were often written to idealise and display the moral virtues of the subject by presenting one's life as an example of moral integrity which led to the creation of the concept of hero-worshipping (Atkinson 2010). There was a general agreement that the nation would benefit from worshipping great individuals, though there was no consensus on who they were and often the association between greatness and goodness was a naïve one. However, what counted is that such biographies were charged with imperialist propaganda which typifies the Victorian period (Atkinson 2010).

The biographical genre also represented the negotiation of cultural tensions by taking into consideration subjects for which it did not immediately seem suited. By remoulding the representation of particular individuals, for instance female writers or social groups such as poets, painters or sects belonging to marginality, implied a reconsideration of the relationship between the biographer, the subject and the reader, since the subject was deliberately removed from the shadows (Booth 2004). The value of 'obscure lives' had the function of elaborating narratives which challenged the general narrowness and uniformity of nineteenth-century life writing. By rescuing the subject, a moral regeneration could be brought to the reader and implicitly to the nation (Woolf 2023). It was therefore considered a way to address the nation as a whole by reminding its duty towards the artists, the poor or the neglected.

In contrast, other biographers, for example Strachey, chose to focus on famous men and women by laying the foundation for the multidimensional biography, that is, an approach in direct contrast with the Victorian unidimensional biography. In this perspective, anecdotes acquired a central

role in analysing one's personality, as it was believed that they revealed the individual's character in selective traits, thus becoming the focal part of its narrative structure (Thirriard 2025) for imperial propagandistic purposes.

These biographies constantly move between an individual and a national perspective and they laid the foundations for a type of biographical writing which later Virginia Woolf picked up and remoulded, and that is still popular today.

4. Propaganda in the 20th century

The 20th century marked a pivotal era in the evolution of the discourse of propaganda, its practices and its means. Already in the first decades of the century, as Bernays notes, a marked shift had already occurred in the practice and instruments of propaganda, particularly after World War I:

It was, of course, the astounding success of propaganda during the war that opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind. The American government and numerous patriotic agencies developed a technique which, to most persons accustomed to bidding for public acceptance, was new. They not only appealed to the individual by means of every approach – visual, graphic, and auditory – to support the national endeavour, but they also secured the cooperation of the key men in every group – persons whose mere word carried authority to hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of followers (Bernays 1928: 27).

As it is widely known, the unprecedented evolution of mass communication was influenced by the rise of mass media, with radio, cinema and advertising progressively developing as powerful tools for shaping public perception. However, despite the increasing dominance of these audio-visual media, print texts retained a significant role in influencing public opinion, particularly in the realm of propaganda (Ellul 1965; John – Silberstein-Loeb 2015). Newspapers and leaflets continued to be some of the most prevalent print mediums. The expansion of national and international newspapers (Conboy – Bingham 2020) facilitated the widespread dissemination of propaganda, allowing governments and political entities to shape public narratives on a grand scale (Chomsky – Herman 1988), influencing public opinion and political landscapes across Europe and beyond.

During both World Wars, governments harnessed the press to disseminate information aimed at bolstering national morale and garnering support for military efforts. In the United Kingdom, the British Council's publication *Britain To-day* functioned as a tool of cultural diplomacy between 1945 and 1954, reflecting the intertwined nature of cultural and informational strategies in post-war Britain (Byrne 2015). During this period newspapers were not simply conveyors of factual reporting – they were curated platforms for state messaging and soft power projection. The Cold War era further exemplified the strategic deployment of the press in global propaganda efforts. In Britain, the covert activities of the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD) reveal the extent to which state institutions sought to manipulate journalistic content. The IRD supplied selected journalists with anti-communist material intended to influence both domestic and international opinion, embedding state-sponsored narratives within ostensibly independent news outlets (Lucas – Morris 2023). These examples highlight the international scope of press-based propaganda and the essential function newspapers performed in shaping public discourse throughout the century.

Central to this propaganda function was the strategic use of language in news discourse. As scholars such as Jowett and O'Donnell (2018) have noted, propaganda is inherently communicative and relies on specific rhetorical techniques to influence attitudes and behaviour. Newspapers frequently employed loaded language, i.e., terms imbued with emotional connotation, as well as emotional appeals to frame events and actors in ways that aligned with ideological objectives and with the editorial agenda of the newspaper, also in letters to the editor (Martini 2025). Chilton and Schäffner (2002) argue that political discourse – especially in the context of propaganda – is often structured to elicit emotional resonance rather than factual clarity. For example, descriptions of wartime enemies often relied on dehumanizing language to justify violence and foster national unity. Also, by invoking fear, pride or moral outrage, newspapers could bypass rational critique and appeal directly to the affective responses of their readers. Similarly, repetition of key slogans or ideological positions across articles served to normalize specific worldviews within public consciousness. According to Richardson (2007), repetition in news discourse reinforces authority and discourages critical interrogation by presenting information as self-evident. These linguistic strategies were not confined to any single national context but were part of a transnational toolkit of persuasion, used by democratic and authoritarian regimes alike throughout the 20th century.

Among printed media outlets, leaflets, in particular, became invaluable during wartime, serving as a direct method of audience targeting (Wardle – Derakhshan 2017). The language used in these print materials was carefully crafted to maximize impact. Euphemisms were commonly employed to sanitize controversial actions, such as referring to civilian casualties as the result of “strategic bombing” (Ellul 1965). Additionally, an “Us vs. Them” (van Dijk 2009) rhetoric permeated these texts, portraying enemies as existential threats to national or moral values (McChesney 2013). Citations of pseudo-scientific data further lent credibility to ideological claims, reinforcing bias (Henderson – Braun 2016). Historical examples illustrate the effectiveness of these strategies; for instance, during World War I, leaflets dropped by aircraft urged enemy troops to surrender, using simple language and assurances of humane treatment (Wardle – Derakhshan 2017). Meanwhile, Nazi Germany’s newspapers, such as *Der Stürmer*, propagated anti-Semitic rhetoric, often fabricating evidence to justify discriminatory policies (Marwick – Lewis 2017).

Political manifestos also emerged as critical propaganda tools throughout the 20th century, particularly during elections and revolutionary movements (Tannen 1998). These documents played a crucial role in shaping public ideology and rallying support for political causes (McChesney 2013). The linguistic techniques within manifestos were deliberately structured to reinforce messages. Repetition of slogans ensured key ideas remained ingrained in public consciousness, while dichotomous language framed political struggles as a battle between the “virtuous” in-group and the “corrupt” out-group (Chomsky – Herman 1988). Rhetorical devices, such as parallelism, enhanced the persuasiveness of these texts. A prime example is the *Fascist Manifesto* of 1919, in which Mussolini outlined his vision for a nationalist, authoritarian state, using dramatic language to promise societal renewal and unity (Marwick – Lewis 2017).

Another major medium for propaganda of the 20th century was film and radio, which, though primarily audio-visual, relied heavily on scripted texts to convey their messages. Propaganda films and radio broadcasts followed a monologic discourse, often delivered by a singular authoritative voice to assert dominance over the narrative (Henderson – Braun 2016). The use of soundbites and concise phrasing made messages more memorable, while strategic modality reinforced the certainty and inevitability of the propagandist’s claims (Ellul 1965). One of the most famous examples of this technique were British wartime radio broadcasts, particularly the speeches of Winston Churchill. His use of inspirational and defiant language played a crucial role in bolstering public morale during World War II (McChesney

2013). Similarly, propaganda films, such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), used carefully crafted scripts to glorify Nazi ideology and reinforce the cult of leadership surrounding Adolf Hitler. While visual elements played a significant role, the text and narration in these films remained central to their persuasive power (Kershaw 2000; Welch 2004).

Throughout the 20th century, advertising too became a powerful tool for disseminating propaganda, influencing consumer behaviour and shaping societal values. Pioneering figures such as Edward Bernays, often called the father of modern propaganda, demonstrated how mass communication could be leveraged to sway public opinion and promote products, services or ideologies (Bernays 1928). Bernays' work highlights the central role of advertising in constructing social realities through carefully orchestrated messages aimed at shaping public desires and behaviors. In advertising, various linguistic techniques were employed to manipulate consumer perceptions and drive purchasing decisions. One prevalent strategy was the use of loaded language – words and phrases with strong emotional connotations that evoke reactions beyond their literal meaning (Vestergaard – Schroder 1985). For example, adjectives like “new,” “improved,” or “exclusive” were used to create a sense of urgency or desirability, enhancing the appeal of products by associating them with positive emotions or societal approval (Vestergaard – Schroder 1985). These techniques are also central to the persuasive power of advertising, as they appeal to consumers' psychological responses rather than rational decision-making.

Repetition also played a crucial role in reinforcing brand messages and ensuring memorability. Advertisers often repeated slogans, brand names or product features in various forms of media to embed them into consumers' minds, making them more familiar and persuasive. This repetition helped enhance brand recall and influenced consumer purchasing behaviour (Tannen 2011). The strategic use of repetition in advertising reinforces the brand's presence in the consumer's mind, ensuring that it is associated with certain values or emotions.

Emotional appeals were a cornerstone also of advertising propaganda. Advertisements frequently capitalized on consumers' emotions – such as fear, happiness, or nostalgia – to create a connection between the product and the consumer's emotional state (Pawle – Cooper 2006). For instance, ads that depicted families enjoying a meal together sought to associate the product with warmth and togetherness, fostering a sense of connection and well-being. By invoking such emotions, advertisements bypass rational analysis and engage consumers on a deeper, affective level.

The use of “glittering generalities” involved the use of vague, positive-sounding words that lacked concrete meaning but conveyed a sense of goodness or desirability. Phrases like “the best a man can get” or “have it your way” evoke positive feelings without providing specific information about the product’s attributes (Leiss et al. 1990). These generalities are often designed to resonate on an emotional level with the consumer, conveying an idealized image that associates the product with personal satisfaction or societal success. Additionally, advertisers frequently employed techniques such as bandwagon appeals, suggesting that a product was popular and that “everyone was using it,” thereby encouraging consumers to conform (Pawle – Cooper 2006). Stereotyping was also used to target specific demographic groups, aligning products with certain lifestyles or identities.

These linguistic and rhetorical strategies reinforced social norms and encouraged conformity through implicit messages embedded in the advertisements; they underscore the sophisticated ways in which advertising has served as a vehicle for propaganda, subtly shaping consumer behavior and societal norms throughout the 20th century. To conclude, over the decades propaganda has evolved alongside mass communication, adapting to modern technologies while keeping the core principles of strategic messaging. Whether through print, political manifestos or scripted media, the deliberate use of language remained central to shaping public opinion and influencing societal outcomes.

5. Propaganda in the 21st century

The 21st century has seen a dramatic shift in how propaganda is produced, disseminated and consumed, primarily due to the rise of digital technologies and social media platforms (Tufekci 2017; Shirky 2011). Traditional print and broadcast media, including broadcast interviews, remain influential, but they are now complemented – and in some cases overshadowed – by newer text types, such as social media posts, memes, blogs and algorithm-driven content (Papacharissi 2015). The defining features of 21st-century propaganda texts are their brevity, interactivity and their ability to spread virally across global networks within minutes (Gladwell 2000) This era of propaganda is characterized by a blend of multimodal elements – text, images, and video – integrated into concise yet highly impactful forms of communication (Shifman 2014).

Research indicates that political leaders’ communications during health crises can blur the lines between informative messaging and propaganda.

The use of emotional appeals, selective fact-sharing and persuasive language in broadcast interviews and social media posts has been documented as strategies meant to sway public opinion and behavior (Rivas-de-Roca – Pérez-Curiel 2023). Broadcast interviews with politicians, international operatives and diplomats have long served as powerful tools for disseminating propagandistic messages, both historically and during recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These interviews provide direct channels for leaders to influence public perception, shape political narratives and advance strategic agendas (Jowett – O'Donnell 2018).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, broadcast interviews have continued to play a significant role in disseminating information and, at times, propagandistic messages. Political leaders and health officials have used interviews to promote public health measures, address vaccine hesitancy and manage crisis communication. However, studies have shown that some of these communications employed propaganda techniques, such as emphasizing emotional appeals and selective presentation of facts, in order to influence public perception and behaviour. Milani, Weitkamp, and Webb (2020), for example, analysed tweets from political leaders during the vaccination rollout and found that communications often utilized propaganda mechanisms, including emotional language and emphasis, to encourage vaccination uptake.

Beside traditional broadcast interviews, one significant text type used in contemporary propaganda is the social media post, which has become a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and political discourse. Social media posts are inherently brief, with platforms like X (previously known as Twitter) restricting content to short, pithy messages. This brevity encourages the use of linguistic features such as hashtags, which not only summarize complex ideas into a single word or phrase, but also allow content to become part of broader discussions, amplifying its visibility (Pariser 2011). For example, during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, hashtags like #MakeAmericaGreatAgain served as both slogans and rallying cries, encapsulating entire ideologies into compact and easily shareable forms (Tufekci 2017). Additionally, emotionally charged language and sensational headlines are frequently used to provoke strong reactions, ensuring greater engagement (Lazer et al. 2018). Social media posts also rely heavily on hyperlinks and multimedia elements, directing users to additional content such as videos or articles, creating a layered, immersive propaganda experience (Papacharissi 2015).

With the transition of traditional printed news towards digital news platforms and apps for portable devices, where readers can interact with the

news directly, user-generated comments beneath news articles have evolved into influential components of news discourse, often serving as conduits for propagandistic messages. These comment sections, designed to foster reader engagement, have become arenas where diverse linguistic strategies are employed to sway public opinion and amplify their persuasive impact. Studies have shown that comments frequently contain uncivil language, including insults and hostile expressions, which can escalate emotional reactions and reinforce in-group solidarity (Ksiazek 2016). Such incivility is not merely a by-product of online anonymity, but often aligns with strategic efforts to dominate discourse and marginalize opposing viewpoints. The aggressive tone used in many comments often serves to polarize audiences and amplify divisive narratives, furthering the spread of specific narratives and potentially influencing readers' beliefs and behaviours (Ksiazek 2016). Moreover, the repetition of certain narratives within comment threads can create a false sense of consensus, a tactic reminiscent of traditional propaganda methods. This repetition can lead readers to perceive fringe opinions as mainstream, manipulating public perception, influencing the interpretation of news and shaping narratives through strategic engagement (Kubin et al. 2024).

Another notable 21st-century text type is the meme, which combines text with imagery to create a highly compressed and visually striking message. Memes rely on humour, satire and cultural references to engage audiences, making them particularly effective at disseminating propaganda in a way that feels informal and accessible (Shifman 2014). Linguistically, memes often employ sarcasm, irony and minimal text to communicate complex ideas succinctly. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, memes were widely used to promote both factual information and misinformation. On one side, government agencies and health organizations created shareable graphics encouraging mask-wearing and vaccinations. Conversely, conspiracy groups spread anti-vaccine propaganda through memes that depicted vaccines as harmful or government-driven plots, using stark imagery and fear-inducing captions to undermine trust in public health initiatives (Donovan et al. 2022). The viral nature of memes allows propaganda to reach audiences across demographic and ideological divides, with their humour and relatability masking the often-manipulative intent behind them (Shifman 2014).

In addition to social media, user-generated comments and memes, fake news articles and clickbait headlines have emerged as critical text types in 21st-century propaganda (Suhr 2021). These articles mimic traditional journalism but are designed to mislead readers, often employing

sensationalized language, false statistics and unverified claims to advance political or ideological agendas (Lazer et al. 2018). The linguistic features of fake news include alarmist vocabulary, appeals to authority through fabricated “experts,” and cherry-picking of data to fit a predetermined narrative. For example, during the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, false claims about the financial costs of EU membership were circulated through articles with inflammatory headlines, such as “We Send £350 Million a Week to the EU!”. These claims, while debunked, influenced public opinion by exploiting cognitive biases such as confirmation bias and emotional reasoning (Benkler et al. 2018).

Furthermore, algorithm-driven content on platforms like YouTube and Facebook has introduced a new layer to the spread of propaganda. Algorithms prioritize engagement, often promoting content that elicits strong emotional responses, such as fear, anger or outrage. This has led to the proliferation of conspiracy theories and extremist propaganda in the form of video essays, commentaries and targeted advertisements (Pariser 2011). Linguistically, these texts often employ persuasive techniques such as anecdotal evidence, repetition and appeals to emotion, creating a sense of urgency or fear. For instance, during the 2020 U.S. presidential election, videos falsely alleging widespread voter fraud were promoted to users likely to engage with such content, reinforcing existing biases and deepening political polarization (Benkler et al. 2018).

The adaptability and reach of these digital text types have fundamentally transformed propaganda in the 21st century. They enable rapid dissemination of information to global audiences, blur the line between fact and opinion and exploit the participatory nature of digital media to foster user-generated content that perpetuates propaganda narratives (Tufekci 2017; Shirky 2011). The combination of linguistic strategies like emotive appeals, brevity and multimodal integration ensures that 21st-century propaganda is more pervasive, persuasive and difficult to counter than ever before.

6. The studies in this issue

In the first contribution to this special issue, **Letizia Vezzosi** reinterprets the Middle English alliterative poem *Saint Erkenwald* not as a traditional hagiography, but as a vehicle of political and theological propaganda. Departing from established genres like *vitae* or *miracula*, the poem is framed as promoting orthodoxy and national identity in late medieval England.

Using discourse analysis, stance theory and lexical analysis, Vezzosi examines how metaphor, deictic shifts and sacramental language encode a unified Christian and national identity. Central to this is the re-contextualisation of the Trajan legend, in which Saint Erkenwald baptizes a just pagan judge, enabling his salvation. This narrative act forges a symbolic link between a mythologised British past and a Christian present, positioning London as a spiritual and cultural inheritor. Through detailed linguistic and structural analysis, the study argues that the poem affirms the Church's sacramental authority while reinforcing emergent English identity, thus contributing to ideological consensus amid the political and religious tensions of the period.

Elisabetta Cecconi examines propaganda discourse in a corpus of 17th-century English pamphlets (PonJ_corpus) about the occupation and colonization of Jamaica between 1655 and 1700. Drawing on the definition of propaganda as a deliberate attempt to influence people's thoughts and behaviours (Taylor 2003), Cecconi analyses how information was strategically presented to encourage migration to the new colony. By applying principles of corpus-assisted discourse studies, the paper explores how language was used to highlight the colony's profitable aspects while minimizing or suppressing its drawbacks. The findings reveal that collocational patterns around the four most frequent keywords in the corpus (i.e., island, Spaniards, Jamaica, Indians) played a significant role in shaping the message and influencing readers' perceptions and behaviours in the changing socio-political context of the time.

The representation of the English language is analysed by **Elisabetta Lonati** in three major 18th-century British encyclopaedias – Chamber's *Cyclopaedia* (1728), *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-1771), and Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1778-1788) – to identify its role in shaping national and linguistic identity during the rise of the British nation-state and Empire. Focusing on the term "Language," the study highlights how these works contributed to the construction of English as a prestigious and robust language capable of reflecting the civil, cultural and intellectual transformations of contemporary British society. By contrast, other European languages, such as Italian, Spanish and French, were depicted as declining, effeminate or exaggerated. Lonati shows how the rhetoric linking language, national identity and the expanding Empire, functioned as a form of national propaganda by aligning linguistic traits with the social values of the emerging British state.

The historical policing of pronunciation in 18th- and 19th-century Britain is traced by **Massimo Sturiale** by first contextualizing how regional accents were socially charged, then turning his focus to early prescriptive works

which constructed a linguistic hierarchy in ‘proper’ pronunciation till the publication of 19th-century newspapers and periodicals. These contributed to extend prescriptive ideologies to a wider public, naturalising linguistic norms through humour, commentary and complaint. Drawing on a corpus of editorials, advertisements and letters to the editor, Sturiale highlights how the press functioned as both a conduit and a creator of metadiscourses on speech. In addition, the author shows that standard language ideologies were not solely imposed from above, but were also reproduced and contested by the reading public. Pronunciation therefore underscores the role of accent in structuring social inclusion and exclusion.

Christina Samson’s contribution focuses on propaganda at a time when in the 1800s it was still considered to have a positive meaning and an educational role while having a persuasive influence on the formation of public opinion. More specifically, Samson analyses a corpus of private letters written by English women during the sepoy uprisings in India. Through a quantitative approach integrated with discourse analysis, the study highlights how the letters were not only re-contextualised when published in the press, but how they also acquired different functions. On the one hand, the writers conveyed factual details of the events they experienced, thus challenging the stereotypical image of passive Victorian women without any personal opinions; on the other hand, all evaluations and recurring phraseology contributed to views of the Indians as the ‘other’, the enemy to be fought. The frequent publication of such letters in the press contributed to enforce a sense of belonging to an English ‘Us’ group while simultaneously leading the way to the initial forms of propaganda.

Matylda Włodarczyk investigates the representation of intellectual women in 19th-century Polish periodicals, with a particular focus on the term ‘bluestocking’ (‘educated, intellectual woman’) and its French (*bas bleu*) and German (*Blaustrumpf*) counterparts, as well as their Polish loan translations (*niebieska/błękitna pończocha/pończoszka*). By adopting an integrated approach that combines evaluation theory, the socio-pragmatics of code-switching and discursive othering, Włodarczyk shows that portrayals of intellectual women often relied on strategies of othering, presenting them in a seemingly light-hearted or humorous way while subtly conveying critical undertones. This ambivalence, along with occasional wit and humour, reflects broader social attitudes and functions as a form of propaganda, aiming to shape perceptions of women in male-dominated public and intellectual spheres and reinforcing male hegemony. The representations also intersect with broader nationalistic ideologies, including xenophobia.

Gabriella Del Lungo and Sabrina Cappelli deal with biographies that helped disseminate the main principles of colonial ideology at a time when England was still at the centre of modern imperial history and the colonised were seen as receiving the benefits of civilisation. More specifically, Del Lungo and Cappelli analyse Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921) by combining a corpus-assisted analysis with a qualitative analysis. Their aim is to highlight how specific keywords and expressions relate to British imperial propaganda discourse based on white superiority. The findings reveal how Strachey establishes and promotes an imperialism based also on matriarchal governance, not only by focusing on Queen Victoria's personality and anecdotes, but also by depicting her changing political status from Princess to Empress of India. In this way, the biographer enables his readers to identify and support this extension of Victoria's domestic female identity to the empire while disclosing the ways in which nationalism propaganda pervaded British society at the end of the 19th century.

Daive Mazzi examines patterns of discourse strategies used in two major propaganda publications during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923) – *Poblacht na hÉireann* and *The Free State*. By adopting the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis and by drawing upon Walton's (1997) framework for the investigation of propaganda, the paper explores how these newspapers represented the opposing factions, questioned their moral credibility, and justified or advocated for their own actions as the right course for Ireland. Using the ICW_Corpus, Mazzi identifies the key rhetorical strategies employed to manipulate public opinion and secure support for the aims of each side'. The findings show that both publications used similar discursive techniques to frame the enemy negatively and present their own faction in a positive light, urging Irish citizens to align with their respective causes. The study concludes that, while not always deceptive, propaganda strategically presents information to advance a political agenda, shaping public perceptions of historical events and figures.

The discursive construction of propaganda in American mass media is examined by **Birte Bös** through a diachronic, corpus-assisted analysis of *TIME* magazine (1923-2006). Focusing on metadiscursive uses of the term 'propaganda', the study uses the TIME Magazine Corpus alongside COCA, COHA and lexical databases to trace core meanings of 'propaganda' and related terms. Keyword and collocation analyses reveal that, despite its typically negative connotation, in *TIME* 'propaganda' displays pragmatic flexibility, shifting in response to socio-political contexts. In fact, its usage peaks during wartime and declines in the early 21st century, with terms like

'manipulation', 'lobbying' and 'public relations' gaining prominence. Bös develops a semantic-functional model to map the term's conceptual field, incorporating rhetorical strategy, communicative framing, informational quality and intended effect. The study underscores the historical contingency of propaganda as a concept and illustrates how Western media subtly reframe ideological persuasion as legitimate communication over time.

Roberta Facchinetti explores the linguistic and pragmatic strategies used by English-language broadcast journalists when interviewing diplomats, focusing on how interviewers balance impartiality with adversarialness. Using a subset of the InterDiplo Corpus – ten interviews with male diplomats by male and female UK-based journalists – the study combines quantitative analysis of question types with qualitative discourse-pragmatic interpretation. Closed questions dominate (53.6%), challenging the norm of open, impartial inquiry. Gender-based differences are evident: male journalists tend to use adversarial strategies, such as rhetorical or negative-interrogative questions, overlaps and assertive statements, while female journalists employ prefatory statements citing external data or prior comments to reduce confrontation. Both groups deviate from journalistic ideals by embedding presuppositions and factual framing within questions. The study reveals a tension between professional norms and the rhetorical demands of confrontational journalism, suggesting that interviewer stance reflects strategic and pragmatic choices as much as journalistic principles.

Marina Bondi, Jessica Jane Nocella and Roberto Paganelli conduct a diachronic analysis of British parliamentary discourse on vaccines from the early 19th century to the Covid-19 pandemic, combining corpus-assisted discourse analysis with health communication research. Using data from the Hansard Corpus (1803-2005) and the ParlaMint 2.1 corpus (2020-2021), the study applies keyword analysis, collocational patterns and semantic preference analysis via AntConc to trace evolving representations of vaccines. Four historical peaks in debate correspond to shifts in public health priorities and epistemic trust. Discourse transitions from early concerns over vaccine reliability to mid-20th century emphasis on prevention and credibility, followed by a late-century focus on side effects, misinformation and economic issues. The Covid-19 phase is characterised by an unprecedented use of promotional language, emotional appeals and nationalistic rhetoric to counteract vaccine hesitancy and support government policies. The study illustrates the strategic role of political discourse in shaping public perceptions of scientific authority and highlights the increasing integration of evaluative and affective language in parliamentary debates on health crises.

Finally, ageist propaganda is investigated by **Isabel Ermida** though the analysis of mock politeness strategies in online news comments posted to reply to articles on age-related topics, drawn from the NETLANG hate speech corpus on the *Daily Mail* website. By combining corpus tools with a qualitative approach, Ermida focuses on four politeness strategies – thanking, complimenting, agreeing and apologizing – and examines whether they are used insincerely, masking ageist intentions. The findings confirm that these strategies often appear polite on the surface but are used to express prejudiced views, revealing a two-phase process: an initial appearance of politeness, followed by a shift to more overtly disrespectful language. The study highlights how politeness strategies, when used manipulatively, create a mismatch between their surface meaning and the underlying harmful content, thus amplifying the negative impact of ageist rhetoric.

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The propagandistic narrative in *Saint Erkenwald*

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ABSTRACT

Saint Erkenwald is an anonymous Middle English alliterative poem whose genre has been long debated, that is whether it is an instance of romance, a hagiographical text or something else, without reaching a general consensus. As a matter of fact, the poem develops around three different themes, linked to each other only through the figure of the saint: England's past, the role of baptism and the translation of the Trajan legend into an English context, themes mirroring some of the main concerns of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, characterised by an emerging English feeling and pride. The present paper will analyse the poem from a completely different perspective, as a form of political and theological propaganda. Through examination of the linguistic strategies used in the narrative, it will show that the author aims to foster a civic unification, by means of consolidating the Christian orthodox view and incorporating the past of England.

Keywords: propaganda strategies, lexicon, collocation, Britishness, Middle English, Christianity.

1. Introduction: The poem and the manuscript

Saint Erkenwald is a Middle English poem of 352 alliterative verses, preserved only in the miscellany codex London, British Library MS Harley 2250, more precisely in folios 72v-75v. Although the codex is unanimously dated to around 1477, thanks to a colophon at f. 64v: "Explicit Speculum Christiani anno domini M^oCCCC^{mo}lxxvij", the composition of the poem itself is more debated: it is agreed to date from an earlier period, but the range oscillates between 1386 and 1420, depending on what scholars claim to be the occasion for the poem.

Since the first edition by Carl Horstmann in 1881, most scholars and editors have regarded the poem as a hagiographic work, mainly because of the presence of an explicit heading recurring on each folio with the saint's name – *De Erkenwaldo*, *De Sancto Erkenwaldo*, *De Stō Erkenwaldo*, *De StōErkenwaldo ep[iscop]o* – and because of the predominant hagiographic character of the other texts contained in the manuscript. Indeed, the codex mainly consists of religious texts – *Memoriale Credentium*, some sermons taken from John Mirk's *Festial*, the *Stanzaic Life of Christ*, the *Speculum Christiani*, the *Legend of the Rood*, the *History of the Invention of the Cross*, and the *Themata Dominicalia* and the *Tabula Diete Salutis*, excerpted from the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Dieta Salutis* –, and of several *vitae*, some taken from the *South English Legendary* (such as those devoted to St Martin of Tours, St John the Baptist; St Peter, St Alban, St Julian, St Julian the Hospitaller), and some connected to the legend of the Rood, such as the life of St Helena. Accordingly, the occasion to write a hagiographic poem devoted to this saint was individuated in the celebrations for the confirmation of the saint's feast day organised by the bishop of London, Robert Braybrooke, in the year 1386 (Gollancz 1922; Savage 1926).

Only more recently have other features of the poem begun to be appraised, in particular its references to historical (legendary and realistic) elements. Looking at the less explicit, but unquestionable, hints at the figure of the king, to the ecclesiological and theological debate on the role of the visible Church and the sacraments, others have postponed the *terminus ad quem* either to 1392 (Grady 1992) or the first decade of the fourteenth century (Nissé 1998; Camp 2013). However, its religious and hagiographical status has not been cast doubt on. At most the edifying figure of the saint has been considered to be instrumental to the author for pointing out his opinion on the role of the Church (Sisk 2007).

In the present paper, a new perspective will be proposed, in which *Saint Erkenwald* is aligned with the poems of both London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.x. and the Alliterative Revival. First, its categorisation as a hagiographic text will be questioned, showing that apart from its heading and its position within a miscellaneous manuscript of religious and hagiographical texts, the poem does not fit in with hagiographic text-types, neither *vitae* nor *miracula* nor *inventions*. As a matter of fact, the three main themes of the poem the critical and scholarly literature has identified (i.e. England's past and Christianisation, the role of baptism in the soul's salvation and the translation of the Trajan legend into an English context) actually mirror some of the main concerns characterising the late fourteenth-

and fifteenth-century England: the Celtic past and the English reign; the role of sacraments and the authority of the 'visible' Church; and the prestige of Latin, and of French language and culture in a context of an emerging English feeling.

Paleographically, the poem itself visually highlights two main sections by only using two capital letters: the former one obviously occurs at the beginning of the poem, the latter at line 177, dividing the historical excursus and the arrival of St Erkenwald from the revelation of the pagan judge and the salvation of his soul. Analysing the author's linguistic choices, *in primis* lexical but also syntactic strategies, informing the narrative scheme, we will demonstrate that the author uses a series of devices to take a stance and direct the audience's opinion towards two main issues, namely the Christian orthodox view, embodied in the sacrament of baptism, and the national (British and Christian) identity, that correspond to the two textual sections signalled by the capital letters. Accordingly, the poem functions as a form of political and religious propaganda, in a period when England was subverted by religious turmoil, linked to Lollards' movements, and political difficulties, such as the Peasants' Revolt and the Lords Appellant, for the establishment of Richard II's reign and maybe in favour of the elevation of the County Palatine of Chester into a principality by the same king (Curry 1979; Vezzosi 2019a, 2019b).

1.1 What *Saint Erkenwald* is about

After the first 32 lines that outline the history of the conversion of Britain, describing the shift from Britons' true belief (Christianity) to Saxons' paganism and the restoration of Christianity thanks to St Augustine's mission, the narration moves to the time of St Erkenwald, in particular to the phases of the destruction of the greatest pagan temple and the building of a "new work" at St Paul's. While working and digging on site, some builders came across a mysterious tomb, adorned with gargoyles, made of grey marble, and inscribed with a series of golden mysterious characters no scholar was able to decipher. Inside they found a beautifully preserved body, dressed in royal garments proper for a king, whose identity nobody – neither laymen nor church people nor monks – seemed to be able to recognise. To solve this puzzling enigma, St Erkenwald, the bishop of London, was summoned. Through prayers, he turns to the Holy Spirit, thanks to whose intervention the body is granted the gift of speech. A long section is devoted to the dead body's speech, in which St Erkenwald and the curious crowd

there gathered – as well as the contemporary audience – are told that he was a righteous judge who lived under the rule of King Belinus, that is in the fourth century before Christ, celebrated by his contemporaries and buried in a glorious fashion for his moral incorruptibility, but unable to enter heaven because he had not been baptised while in life and forced into a *lewid date* ('uncalculable period' l. 205). The whole crowd is moved to tears by his suffering, and so is the bishop whose tears casually fell on the body exactly at the same moment that the bishop is wishing to be able to administer baptism and therefore is reciting the formula "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost". Thus, baptism unexpectedly takes place and, as the audience understands from the judge's words themselves, the soul of the pagan judge is sitting at the heavenly table together with the holy souls and the angels. At these words, his material corpse and tomb instantly dissolve, leaving the audience in awe. The poem concludes with an ordinate parade with St Erkenwald at its head while St Paul's church's bells ring.

This short summary is essential to identify the main topics and participants the poem focuses on. First of all, four main characters are at stake: besides the most obvious ones – e.g., Erkenwald and the judge – London is also to be regarded as a protagonist, and so are its inhabitants. As far as the topics the poem is dealing with are concerned, there is no doubt about the centrality of baptism, thanks to which the judge's soul reaches its salvation. Its relevance is also stressed by the fact that the other protagonist, i.e., London, is undergoing processes described in terms of the administration of this sacrament. Next to this topic, the role of history cannot be ignored: while apparently the scene involves different temporal layers, the selection of deictics, adverbs, verbal modes and denominations level them into an a-temporal time and a-spatial place closely identifiable with the time and the place of the reader.

1.2 How propaganda is conveyed through discourse and stance

Propaganda operates as a potent tool in shaping public perception and influencing behavior, often embedded subtly or overtly within the way discourse is constructed and stance is expressed.

Discourse, in the sociolinguistic and critical sense, refers to how language is used in communication and how it actively constructs social realities. As Fairclough (1992) argues, discourse is more than a vehicle for communication; it plays a pivotal role in shaping societal norms, values,

and power relations or in constructing truth (Foucault 1972). Propaganda strategically uses discourse to control narratives, framing issues in a way that aligns with the propagandist's objectives, through the choice of specific words, metaphors, or rhetorical structures. For instance, creating an us-versus-them dichotomy is a way to legitimize one viewpoint while marginalizing others; or using positive vs. negative qualifications, such as "barbaric invaders" vs. "brave defenders" in warlike contexts, creates a frame within which the audience is led to adopt a binary worldview.

Another key element in the effectiveness of propagandistic discourse is how stance is embedded within it, inasmuch as stance refers to the attitudes, judgments, and positions that speakers or writers convey about their subjects or interlocutors. According to Biber and Finegan (1989), stance encompasses linguistic markers of certainty, affect, and subjectivity, which can subtly influence an audience's perception of truth and authority. The way stance is articulated – through expressions of certainty, evaluative language, or emotional appeal – can make propaganda more persuasive. Du Bois (2007) highlights the interactive nature of stance-taking, where speakers position themselves not only in relation to the content but also in dialogue with the audience. This dynamic interplay allows propagandists to align themselves with the audience's values, reinforcing in-group solidarity and shaping collective identity. By calibrating their stance to match the emotional and cognitive expectations of their target audience, propagandists can subtly reinforce ideologies, making their messages more resonant and difficult to refute. For instance, the use of inclusive pronouns like "we" and "us" can create a sense of collective identity. At the same time, a negative stance can be adopted towards those that are described through diminishing or negative attributes, such as "corrupt", "immoral" and so on.

In a propagandistic text, the interplay between discourse and stance is therefore crucial. Through a careful discourse structuring a seemingly coherent and authoritative worldview can be presented and through a strategic use of stance the appeal to shared values and an emotional response control can be assured. As Jowett and O'Donnell (2012) explain, the success of propaganda often lies in its ability to embed these elements seamlessly, making the message appear natural and incontrovertible.

Although most studies of propaganda, stance, and discourse structure focus on contemporary texts, analysing this medieval poem could reveal that the language used in this text can be explained from a propagandistic perspective and that propagandistic strategies have not changed significantly over time.

2. The Genre of *Saint Erkenwald*

One of the most significant literary genres in Middle English is surely the narrative of *exempla*, in particular of religious *exempla*, concerning saints, as proved by wills in which they are mentioned as a part of the inheritance (Long 2006: 52), by the circulation of devotional miscellanies in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and by the fact that well-renowned authors, such as Geoffrey Chaucer (*Life of St Cecilia*), John Lydgate (*Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*), Osbern Bokenham (*Life of St Anne*) or John Capgrave (*Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*) among others, devoted themselves to this genre. More precisely, hagiographic works are classified into *miracula*, *inventio*, and *vita*. As the names themselves imply, *miracula* mainly deal with the miracles either done by the saints or related to the motivation underlying their canonisation and the *inventiones* focus on relics and their finding. They are often composed either to strengthen an established cult or to establish one. The *vitae* are characterised by some conventionalised narrative sections, such as the description of the saints' lineage (usually a noble and/or powerful family), life, and, more significantly, conversion and the account of the reason for their canonisation: the martyrdom they suffered or the miracles they performed or their role in defending and spreading Christianity. Supported by some formal features, such as the heading and the content of the texts contained in the manuscript through which the poem *Saint Erkenwald* was handed down, scholars have traditionally interpreted it as a hagiography. Some have held it as an example of a *miraculum* (McAlindon 1970), some as a case of *inventiones* (Otter 1994), and some others as a *vita* (Peterson 1977): "*St. Erkenwald* can more easily be read as a poetic rendering of an episode from a *vita* celebrating the intercessory powers evidenced by Erkenwald during his lifetime" (Sisk 2007: 95). However, they all agree in recognising that the poem is a peculiar representative of these text-types.

If the discovery of the sarcophagus shows a series of *topoi* proper to medieval *inventio* – such as the indecipherable inscription, the description of the excavations, the rhetorical figures and the figurative lexicon connected to the opening and closing of the sarcophagus and, finally, the discovery of the body – nevertheless, what is found is not the saint or something related to him, but *ay a freke faithles* (a man without faith, and therefore a pagan). In other words, the reader is not faced with the discovery of relics subject to veneration. Classifying it as a *miraculum* would be equally unusual, because the real miracle is the decomposition of the body and the royal insignia that had been "wonderfully" preserved for one thousand and three hundred

years: the dissolution of the earthly vestiges of the judge corresponds to the beginning of his soul's eternal life, as he himself tells the audience. In other words, it would be a case of a negative miracle, which leaves no trace on the earth, in contrast to the main feature of the genre of *miracula*, which are always motivated by the presence of relics, like *inventiones*. One could claim that the miracle is the baptism itself and the consequent salvation of the Judge's soul. It would still be unconvincing, because Erkenwald neither has control nor is aware of what is happening. The event – the tear – is random and not determined by Erkenwald's will (Kamowski 1995; Vezzosi 2019a, 2019b), as proved by the use of the verb *lenen*, which is the special predicate for giving or bestowing with God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, Fortune, etc., as agents (cf. MED sv. *lenen*) and of the subjunctive mood, which expresses a wish, a possibility, not a reality (Mustanoja 1960). Accordingly, Erkenwald is rather the intermediary of God's will than the conscious agent performing the sacrament (Vezzosi 2019a).

- (1) “Oure lord lene, quaþ þat lede, þat þou lyfe hades
 By goddis leue, as longe as I myzt lacche water
 & cast vpone þi faire cors & carpe þes wordes:
 I folwe þe in þe fader nome & his fre childes
 & of þe gracious holy goste – & not one grue lenger.
 Þene þof þou droppyd down dede, hit daungerde me lasse!”
 Wt þat worde þat he warpyd þe wete of eghene
 & teres trillyd adoun & one þe toumbe lightene:
 & one felle one his face: & þe freke syked. (ll. 314-322)¹

[“Allow our Lord,” said the man, “that you have life / by the grace of God, and as long as I can get water / and spread it on your beautiful body and say these words: / “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of his noble Son / and of the Holy Spirit full of grace” – and so be it”. / After that even if you drop dead, that will hinder me a little!” / With those words, he spread the moisture from his eyes / and tears flowed down and shone on the grave / and one fell on his face and the man sighed.]

About Erkenwald, a well-documented historical figure, hagiographic works have flourished since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the anonymous *Miracula sancti Erkenwaldi* and *Vita sancti Erkenwaldi Londoniensis*

¹ Every quotation of the poem is based on Horstmann's edition (1887). Translations are mine, if not otherwise stated.

*episcopi*² and later with John of Tymouth's *De Sancto Erkenwaldo episcopo et confessore* within his *Sanctilogium Angliae Walliae Scotiae et Hiberniae* and the seventeenth-century *The flowers of the lives of the most renowned saints of the three kingdoms England Scotland, and Ireland* (1632). Like the more historical works, such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (vol. II §4-6 in Lapidge's 2008 edition) and William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (§ii.73.10-11 in Winterbottom's 2007 edition), those hagiographies remember Erkenwald as a famous bishop of London who founded two monasteries – the more important double-monastery in Bark directed by his sister Æthelburg and the one in Chertsey for himself –, and record the miracles connected to his holiness: that is, the waters of the river Yla went still and separated to facilitate the passage of the litter on which the body of the saint was carried during the transfer to the cathedral of St Paul's; and the thaumaturgic power of the saint's sedan chair or litter (and the wood of which it was made) during his body's removal when touched by the sick. The *Vita* also records the miracle of the two-wheeled chariot, which continued to roll down the road, despite having lost one. No hint to the narrative present in the poem is found everywhere else. However, this would not affect its categorisation as a hagiography. The problem is that, unlike the above-mentioned texts, the poem does not share a considerable number of scholarly established conventions canonically linked to the genre (Sanok 2019): it does not describe the lineage of Erkenwald, nor his vocation or mission, nor his life or his death, nor his posthumous miracles, as happens both in the *Miracula* and in *Vita sancti Erkenwaldi*, nor the reason why he is a saint, as his holiness is taken for granted from the beginning and throughout the poem. On the contrary, it is the pagan judge who, introducing himself, talks about his own descent, the period in which he lived (ll. 197-204), the context in which his faithful and rightful work was performed (ll. 207-213), the supreme justice inspiring his actions (ll. 227-229) and allowing his body and clothes to be kept intact and finally about his death and *post mortem* events (ll. 245-250). Accordingly, if any, *Saint Erkenwad* should be considered as the judge's *vita*, which is unsustainable because it would be totally anachronistic to claim that at the time some celebrated a pagan and secular saint.³

² Whatley (1986) discussed in details both the editions of the *Miracula* and of the *Vita* and their sources.

³ The judge's episode recalls the well-renowned legend of St Gregory and Trajan (Vezzosi 2019a).

Other features make the poem difficult to categorise as a prototypical example of devotional genre and at the same time make it peculiar and exceptional: the presence of an initial historical excursus on Britannia and the description of the Christianisation of London, which are totally unmotivated in a hagiographic narrative, whereas something similar occurs in epic poems, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or *Brut*; the indulging attention given to the discovery and the guise of the sarcophagus and the judge's appearance, the thorough characterisation of the Londoners by distinguishing them according to their jobs, social tasks and offices, and finally the unity of place (the churchyard of St Paul's in London) and time (a day in the period of the cathedral's (re)construction) of the entire narration.

The analysis of such peculiarities will disclose the propagandistic nature or mission of this poem that is saying its word about some of the major concerns of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century London and England.

3. The Baptism

As is clear from the summary, there is no doubt that the main episode is centred on the sacrament of baptism, namely on the Christian sacrament of baptism according to the very same judge's words – ll. 298-299: *Bot, mendyd wt a medecyne, ze are made for to lyuye: / Bat fulloght in fonte, wt faitheful bileue* [but, cured with a medicine we are made to live: that baptism in [baptismal] font in the faithful belief] –, a theme to which the second section of the poem, comprising the judge's revelation (ll. 177-309), the saint's intervention (ll. 310-320) and the judge's soul's salvation (ll. 321-345) is fully devoted. This episode of the judge has been unanimously considered to be a version of the renowned legend of the emperor Trajan and St Gregory (cf. Whatley 1986; Grady 1992, 2005; Kamowski 1995; Thijms 2005; Sisk 2007), which played a significant role within the medieval theological debate on the status of righteous pagans and on the concept of predestination. In particular, in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, it was a theme addressed to answer the theological and ecclesiological question on the role of the visible Church. According to Lollards and the Oxford theologian Wyclif, whose thought was central to the entire Lollard movement, salvation was granted only to the predestined, and therefore the visible Church had no role or power because only God could dispense grace. On the contrary, according to the dogma of the real presence, the orthodox position of the official

Church theorised the capacity of rituals and sacraments administered by its clergymen to effect transformations in the state of being, and consequently both the necessity of sacraments, namely baptism, for the salvation of the soul and the importance of clergymen in their role as celebrants (cf. Coley 2008).

The version given in the poem apparently speaks in favour of an orthodox view, since the judge's salvation is seen as a consequence of the intervention of Erkenwald, who is a saint, but more significantly a champion of the visible Church. Looking at his lexical choices, it is clear that the poet wants to insist on the figure of Erkenwald as a bishop. First of all, he mainly referred to him as such (*þe byschop* l. 3, l. 105, l. 129, l. 142, l. 159; *bisshop* l. 33, l. 111) and, less frequently, as a prelate or primate (l. 129, l. 137, and l. 104) or with the qualification as a saint (l.4 *Saynt Erkenwolde*), using, on the contrary, his own name without appellation only thrice (l. 32 *Erkenwolde*, l. 105 *Sir Erkenwolde*, l. 117 *Ser Erkenwolde*). Secondly, Erkenwald's actions, described in the poem, technically identify him as a clergyman and an officiant: in particular, the celebration of the Mass (ll. 131-132 *w^t his ministres þe masse he begynnnes / Of sp(iritu)s d(o)m(ini)* 'with his minsters he begins the mass of Spiritus Sanctus', l. 137 *Tille cessayd was þe seruice & sayde þe later ende* 'Until the service was finished and the concluding formula [was] said'), the prayers (l. 119 *al þe nyzt hade naityd his houres* 'all night [he] recited his hours'; and the invocation (*bisechen*⁴) to God and the Holy Spirit (ll. 116-132) that appears to be essential for Erkenwald, that is for a human, to understand the mystery of the tomb and the intact corpse (ll. 122-125: "*þaghe I be vnworthi*", *al wepande he sayde, / Thurghe his deere debonerte, "digne hit, my lorde, / In confirmynge þi cristen faithe fulsene [filsten?] me to kenne / þe mysterie of þis meruaile þat mene opone wondres!*"). In other words, the reader and the listener is continuously reminded that the judge's soul is saved through the intervention of Erkenwald who, as an officiant and as a clergyman, performed the sacrament by pouring the water and pronouncing the words.⁵

The theme of the baptism is not limited to the stories of the wonder of the intact corpse and tomb of the pagan and righteous judge, but pervades the entire narration. The poem starts with a sort of synopsis that condenses the main steps of the Christianisation of Britain, metonymically represented by London. Once established the unit of place (l. 1: *At Londone in Englonde* 'In London, in England'), the past is evoked, apparently in

⁴ MED s.v. *bisechen* "[t]o say a prayer; pray (to God); pray (after, for sth.)", especially in combination with mercy, grace or help of God.

⁵ "[T]he poem argues that no matter how worthy the soul, the form of baptism by word and by water is necessary for salvation" (Kamoski 1995: 6).

chronological order according to Bede's account, but it is not the historical past of Britain/London, but its Christian one. Therefore, the narration starts with the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and continues with an enormous jump into Erkenwald's time when London was undergoing a process of Christianisation after the *adventus Saxonum*, whose paganism was imposed over Britons' Christianity. The re-conversion process (l. 13: *& conuertyd alle þe communnates to cristendame newe* 'and [Augustine] converted all the people to Christianity again') looks peculiar in that it is described as a re-naming and cleaning programme:

- (2) He turnyd temples þat tyme þat temyd to þe deuelle,
 & clansyd hom in Cristes nome & kyrkes home callid,
 He hurlyd owt hor ydols & hade hym in sayntes,
 & chaungit cheuely hor nomes & chargit home better:
 Þat ere was of Appolyne, is now of saynt Petre,
 Mahone to saynt Margrete oþer to Maudelayne,
 þe Synagoge of þe sonne was sett to oure lady,
 Jubiter & Jono to Jhesu oþer to James.
 So he home dedifiet & dyght alle to dere halowes,
 Þat ere was sett of Sathanas in Saxones tyme.
 Now þat Londone is neuenyd, hatte "þe new Troie" (ll. 14-24)

[And he changed the temples that belonged to the devil at that time / and purified them in the name of Christ and called them churches, / He cast away their idols and brought saints into them / and successfully changed their names and bound them with oaths for the better. / What was Apollo's is now St Peter's, / Muhammad was changed to St Margaret or St Magdalene. / The synagogue of the Sun was dedicated to Our Lady, / Jupiter and Juno became Jesus or James. / Thus he rededicated [lit. dedicated and gave] them to the saints / that had previously been assigned to Satan in the time of the Saxons. / What is now called London was called "the New Troy"]

The choice of predicates to describe the conversion is meaningful: in order, *turnen*, *clensen*, *callen*, *changen names*, *chargen*, *dedifien*, *dighen*, and *nevenen*. First of all, it is striking that the conversion is represented through a series of acts that seem to exclusively concern the city, more specifically its religious buildings. Out of eight, five predicates either could or do refer to the actions performing the baptism which involve purifying (i.e. cleaning with water) from sin and giving a name: *clensen*, *callen*, *changen names*, *chargen*, and *nevenen*. One can justifiably argue that *clensen* is the prototypical verb for the sacrament: since its first attestation, the verb has shown a metaphorical

use, when it implies to make clean from moral dirt, i.e. sin or guilt (e.g. 971 Blickl. Hom. 35: *Þæt we [...] ure synna clænsian* ‘that we purge our sins’), but in Middle English, it gets combined with rituals and ceremonies,⁶ especially with baptism: e.g. c1175 Orm.(Jun 1)18171: *He þurh fulluhht shall ben Off alle sinness clennessedd*. ‘He shall be purged from every sin through baptism’; a1200 Trin.Hom.(Trin-C B.14.52)87: *Þat [the rite of circumcision] clenese þe man of sinne swo doð nu fulluht*. ‘That cleansed the man from sin just as baptism does now’. The conversion itself is embodied by the act of naming: they do nothing but appoint a new name (e.g. *callen*). Which name to give is not relevant in itself, but it is sufficient that it changes and alliterates with the pagan one (i.e. *chancen names*). Renaming is not an end in itself but implies binding the renamed object, in this case, to an oath, an act of faith, as the use of the polysemic *chargen* suggests: *chargen* in its legal meaning is the predicate used in confession to bind by oath, to pun under oath or to promise solemnly (for instance on the Book or more simply by oath). In this perspective, also *turnen* assumes special nuances and triggers specific implications: although the physical movement is unquestionably among its first and predominant meanings, one cannot but associate its use in this poem with the abstract interpretation of *turning*, where the ends of the movement are the polar ends of Christianity and Paganism. Interestingly, this is how the verb is used in *Lazamon’s Brut*:

- (3) c1275(?a1200) Lay.Brut (Clg A.9)14741: *Þa iwende seint Austin vorð... þurh-ut Englelond & turnde hit to Godes hond*.

[Then St Augustine went forth throughout England and brought it into God’s hand]

In other words, the conversion is symbolically represented as a baptismal ritual, which culminates with the rechristening of the city: what was named New Troy is now called London. Intriguingly, similar parallelisms between the relation Christianity vs. Paganism and the act of renaming is found in *The Brut, or The chronicles of England*, where the arrival of the Saxon not only causes the abandonment of Christianity, but also the renaming of the land (*chaunge þe name of þe lande*) as ‘the land of Engist’:

- (4) 1419 c. *The Brut, or The chronicles of England*. Edited from Ms. Raw. B171, Bodleian Library, cap. LIX, p. 55: *in euery place lete caste adoune*

⁶ MED s.v. *clensen*: “3. (a) To purify (sb.) by appropriate rites, make (sth.) ceremonially clean”.

chercheȝ and houses of religioun, and destroyed Cristendome þrouȝ
þe lande, and lete chaunge þe name of þe lande, þat no man of his
were so hardy after þat tyme to calle þis lande Britaigne, but calle it
Engistes lande

In *Sir Gawain and the Green knight*, it is the same verb *nevenen*, used in the poem to express the christening of the city as London, that indicates the naming of Rome after Romulus – e.g. c1400(?c1390) *Gawain* (Nero A.10)10: *þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst, & neuenes hit his aune nome* ‘he builds that town first and calls it after his own name’.

The metaphor of baptism is further strengthened at the end of the poem, when the judge’s soul is safely sitting at the heavenly supper and informs St Erkenwald and the community of believers gathered around the judge’s tomb.

- (5) [...] “oure sauyoure be louyd!
Now herid be þou, heghe god, & þi hende moder,
& blissid be þat blisful houre þat ho the bere in!
& also be þou, bysshop, þe bote of my sorowe[...]
Ryȝt now to soper my soule is sette at þe table,
For w þe wordes & þe water þat weshe vs of payne
Liztly lasshit þer a leme loghe in þe abyne,
þat spakly sprent my spyrit w vnsparid murthe (ll. 322-335)

[“Praised be Jesus Christ! / Now praised be You, O Most High, and Your Mother full of grace, /and blessed be that blessed moment in which it gave birth to you! / And also be you, bishop, the remedy for my sorrow [...] Right now my soul is sitting at the dinner table, / for, with words and the water that washes away our sins, / a ray of light shines brightly down there, down in the abyss.]

After the tear has fallen on the judge’s face, the audience (both in the poem and in reality) does not know what is happening to his soul. They only see his body’s decomposition. In just one sentence uttered by the either disappearing or disappeared judge, the audience realises it: l. 324 *also be þou, bysshop, þe bote of my sorowe*. By selecting the word *bote*, the author actually evokes in the listener/reader’s mind either concept of both remedy and salvation: as a matter of fact, *bote* primarily expresses the idea of profit or benefit and relief or remedy (from a source outside oneself), but, especially in collocation with *soule*, it can also mean both salvation – e.g. c1175(?OE) *Bod.Hom.*(*Bod 343*)96/7: *Bonne do we þæt to bote & to clænsunge ure sawlæ*

‘Then we do that for the salvation and the purification of our soul’ – and saviour – e.g. ?a1300 *Suete ihu king* (Dgb 86)9: *Swete ihesu, mi soule [vr. huerte] bote!* ‘Sweet Jhesus, saviour of soul [heart]’. Thus, in this passage, the author explains that the pagan judge’s salvation has been possible thanks to the baptism for which he expressively thanks Erkenwald literally defined as ‘the remedy of his pain’.

Like *clensen*, *washen* too can have a figurative meaning, involving the idea of ritual purification from spiritual stain, often in combination with guilt, sin, evil, wickedness and so on – e.g. c1175 *Lamb. Hom. 157*: [...] *heo werð hire solf waschen of hire fule sunnen*. ‘she is herself washed from her impure sins’ – to such an extent that during Middle English period they are often used as synonyms in binominal constructions⁷ – e.g. 1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 112 *be herte þet is..yclensed and ywesse be zoþe ssrifte*. ‘the heart that is cleansed and washed by the true Scripture’. Thus they can alternate in the baptismal formula as well as in the description of the ritual itself:

- (6) (a1438) *MKempe A* (Add 61823)30/23: Þow seyst þe prest take þe chyld at þe funt-ston & dyppe it in þe watyr & wasch it fro oryginall synne

[You see the priest taking the child at the baptismal font and dip it into the water and wash it from the original sin]

a1400(a1325) *Cursor* (Vsp A.3)25720: Pou wasch [Göt: wis] us first of adam plight, In funt quen we were cristen dight.

[You clean us first from Adam’s guilt in the font when we are made Christian]

It is unquestionable that *þe wordes* & *þe water* refer to the water used and the words uttered during the confecting of the sacrament, and so does the verb *washen*. Less clear it is why the verb here combines with *payne* ‘pain’ and what it means. *Washen* and *clensen* are never attested with words expressing the notion of pain. Moreover, the same Middle English word *þein(e)*, usually expressing punishment and torments deriving from punishment, expands into the domain of suffering and sorrow but only in connection with the punishment Christ suffered for mankind on the Cross – e.g. a1400 *Cursor*

⁷ Binominals are one of the most recurrent strategies employed during the Middle English period to introduce new meanings, new words or new formations into the language (Vezzosi 2020). In this case, the figurative meaning of *washen* is actually a later development attested since the beginning of the Middle English period, but spread from the fourteenth century onward.

(Trin-C R.3.8)8099: *Peyne on þat tre suffre he shal.* 'he shall suffer pain on that tree'; (c1390) Chaucer CT.Pars.(Manly-Rickert)I.282: *Jesu Crist took vp on hym self the peyne of alle oure wikkednesses.* 'Jesus Christ took upon himself the suffering/punishment of all our wickedness'; c1400(c1378) PPI.B (LdMisc 581)5.411: *Goddes peyne and his passioun [...]* 'God's suffering and his passion [...]'. Such an unexpected collocation cannot be casual, especially in a poem unanimously recognised to be the outcome of a refined and expert poet. It is not peregrine to imagine that the author structures the passage in such a way to remind the role of the baptism, that is to wash us of our sins, of the original sin, of which Christ took upon himself the punishment and because of which he suffers on the Cross.

In other words, the author through his lexical and stylistic choices makes sure that the general theme of the (ritual of) baptism encompasses the entire narration, by evoking it in the historical overview at the beginning, making it reach its climax in the central episode and recalling it in a sort of condensed catechism at the end. At the same time, he stressed the role of an external agent, responsible for the efficacy of the sacrament: St Erkenwald, the archbishop, representative on earth of God/Christ.

4. Time shifting in *Saint Erkenwald's* narrative

One of the unexpected features of this poem is the apparent chronological accuracy in that the poet takes a lot of care in specifying the time reference for each event mentioned. Whereas there is a unity of place in that only one location is mentioned, that is London and more specifically St Paul Cathedral's foundation and parvis, the unity of time concerning the main episode – the discovery of the wonder and the salvation of the pagan's soul – is rather illusory. Not only does the narration develop around and include several facts comprising a time span of more than one thousand years, but the author also seems to adopt linguistic strategies that confound the various temporal levels into an a-temporal point of time in which the audience and the author might identify.

The discovery of the "wonder", i.e. the magnificent and intact tomb and corpse, neither clergymen nor scholars are able to understand or identify, is undoubtedly temporally located in the seventh century, because Erkenwald is a well-known historically important figure who lived in that time. As undeniable is that the burial of the pagan judge goes back to the fourth century since he himself said he lived and administered the (pagan)

law as a righteous judge during the reign of Belinus, the famous legendary king of the Britons, recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

- (7) Þe lengthe of my lyuing here þat is a lewid date,
 Hit (is) to meche to any mone to make of a noumbre:
 After þat Brutus þis burghe had buggid one fyrste
 Noȝt bot fife hundred zere þer aghtene wontyd,
 Before þat kynned ȝour Criste by cristene acounte
 A þousande zere & þritty mo & zet threnene aght.
 I was ane heire of anoye in þe new Troie
 In þe regne of þe riche kyng þat rewlit vs þene,
 The bolde Bretone ser Belyne, ser Berynge was his brothire –
 Mony one was þe busmare bodene home bitwene
 For hor wrakeful werre, quil hor wrathe lastyd.
 Þene was I iuge here enioynyd in gentil lawe". (ll. 205-216)

[The length of my lying here, which is an unknown duration, / is too much for any man to calculate. / After Brutus first built this city, / it took five hundred minus eighteen years / before Christ was born, according to the calculation of the Christians, / [therefore I am lying for] a thousand and thirty years and three times eight more. / I was an heir of pain in new Troy, / in the realm of the rich king who led us then, / the brave Briton Ser Belinus, whose brother was Ser Brennius – / Many were the insults they exchanged one another, / for their ruinous war, while their hatred lasted. / It was then that I was made a judge here under a pagan law."]

In between, the poem records three fundamental facts happening in these thousand years: the Passion of Christ and the institution of Christianity; the *adventus Saxonum* (the arrival of Saxons), who made Christian Britons flee and imposed paganism, and St Augustine's mission, which re-established the Christian faith in the country, of which Erkenwald is a representative as a bishop and a saint.

- (8) At Londone in Englonde, noȝt fulle longe sythene
 Eft Crist suff ride one crosse & cristendome stablyde,
 Ther was a byschop in þat burghe, blessyd & sacryd:
 Saynt Erkenwolde, as I hope, þat holy mon hatte.
 In his tyme in þat tone þe temple aldergrattyst
 Was drawene done, þat one dole to dedifie new,
 For hit hethene had bene in Hengyst dawes
 Þat þe Saxones vnsauȝt hadene sende hyder.

Þai bete oute þe Bretons & broȝt hom in-to Wales,
 & peruertyd alle þe pepul þat in þat place dwellide.
 Þene was this reame renaide mony ronke ȝeres,
 Til saynt Austyne in-to Sandewiche was sende fro þe pope:
 Þen prechyd he here þe pure faythe & plantyd þe trouthe
 & conuertyd alle þe communnates to cristendame newe. (ll. 1-14)

[In London, England, not long / after Christ had suffered on the cross and
 founded Christianity, / there was a blessed bishop in that city and consecrated,
 / St Erkenwald, I believe, that holy man was called. / In his time, in that city,
 the largest temple, / was demolished, most of it, to build a new one / since had
 been a pagan temple in the days of Hengist / whom the hostile Saxons had
 sent there. / These drove the Britons out and took them to Wales / And they
 corrupted all the nations that they lived in those places. / It was then that this
 kingdom gave up its faith for many lawless years / until St Augustine was sent
 to Sandwich by the Pope. / Then he preached here pure faith and sowed the
 truth / and converted all communities back to Christianity.]

The selection of the historical facts and their arrangement are not casual. If the sequence is chronological, the sense of historical progressivity is not so straightforward. Although they are not interrelated, the strategies adopted present them as were they a consequence of each other, but in reality they were quite disconnected. The establishment of Christianity and Christ's Passion are syntactically linked to the following presentative clause through the adverbial locution *noȝt fulle longe sythene* 'not long afterwards' which puts thematically near, if not temporally, the institution of Christianity and the seventh-century London with its bishop Erkenwald. Indeed, the London of St Erkenwald could not exist if Christ had not suffered on the Cross, because it is deeply Christianised. The arrival of Saxons is therefore described as an act of hostility: They are said to be *vnſauȝt* 'hostile, aggressive, warlike', and accordingly their coming turns out to be an act of aggression and enmity. Such a view on the event would be totally obvious if it were seen with the eyes of a Briton or even a Christian Anglo-Saxon of Erkenwald's time, but more ambiguous for the author of the poem, who is a descendant of those Saxons. However, this apparent discrepancy clears itself in a Christian perspective, because the arrival of the Saxons causes a traumatic break in the history of Christianity on the island with the imposition of their pagan beliefs. The choice of *pervoerten* to describe the conversion to paganism is not neutral, because the image evoked by this verb is that of turning away from the right to the wrong direction, that is from the right to the 'uncorrect' religion. Such a reading might well reflect the point of view of

such a Christian as the fourteenth-century English author and is further confirmed by the antonym (*converten*) chosen to refer to what the Christian mission did. The juxtaposition of these two predicates ideally creates the image of a continuous path of Christianity, in which the author identifies himself, stemming from Christ's Passion, through the (Roman-) Celtic culture up to Erkenwald's time, broken by the Saxon paganism and restored by the intervention of St Augustine. The use of *renaiden* becomes accordingly less absurd: as pagan, Saxons could not possibly have renounced or disavowed the Christian faith, but this was what the Britons, subject of their reign, did.

Continuity is re-established by St Augustine's works, which re-semanticized the places of worship, attributing them a new function, symbolised by the new names alliterating with the previous ones. There is only one exception: in the case of l. 5 *þe temple aldergrattyst* it is necessary to uproot the previous building from the foundations, due to the powerful wickedness of the pagan deity it was dedicated to (l. 27 and l. 29) and named after (l. 28). To convey the idea of the total removal of the pagan past from the symbol of Christianity the predicates expressing destruction (l. 6, l. 37) are more frequent than those meaning construction (l. 5 *dedifie new*, l. 37 *buggyd efte new*).

- (9) Now þat Londone is neuenyd, hatte þe new Troie –
 Þe metropol & þe mayster-tone hit euermore has bene.
 Þe mecul mynster þerinne a maghty deuel aght,
 & þe tittle of þe temple bitan was his name,
 For he was dryghtyne derrest of ydols praysid;
 [...]
 Now of þis Augustynes art is Erkenwolde bischop
 At loue Londone tone, & the laghe teches,
 Syttes semely in þe sege of saynt Paule mynster,
 Þat was þe temple Triapolitan, as I tolde are.
 Þene was hit abatyd & beten done, & buggyd efte new,
 A noble note for þe nones, & new werke hit hatte. (ll. 25-38)

[What is now called London used to be called "the New Troy" / became the archbishopric and the capital forever. / A mighty devil owned the great cathedral yonder, / and the title of this corrupted temple was his name, / for he was the dearest lord among the worshiped idols, [...] Now Erkenwald is the bishop of this province of Augustine, / in his beloved city of London and teaches law / and sits with honour on the episcopal seat of St Paul's Cathedral. / That was the Tripolitan temple, as I said before. / Then it was torn down and destroyed and built again, / a grand deal for the occasion, and the new work was called.]

Unlike the other pagan temples, no new name seems to be appointed to this new building, but “new work”, that is, it seems to be remembered as the only building that has been reconstructed, and not just renamed. The reader has all the clues to infer rightly both that it was also rechristened and what new name was given: St Paul’s (l. 28). One can wonder why the author is not so explicit in this case as he is in the others and simply records that this incredible work was called “new werke”. The term “newe werke” was indeed very evocative in his time, evocative and therefore on no account accidental, because it was precisely the epithet used to designate the enlargement programme of St Paul’s Cathedral commenced in 1256 and completed in 1314. Using this epithet, the author leads his audience to place the whole story ideally in his own era, and to identify themselves as descendent of the previous Christian rather than the Saxons.

A parallel temporal shift is brought about by the possible interpretations triggered by the time adverb in l. 25: *Now þat Londone is neuenyd, hatte þe new Troie* ‘What is now called London used to be called the New Troy’. The point in time identified by *now* is indeed ambiguous, as it could refer both to the time of the actions narrated in the poem, i.e. St Erkenwald’s time, and the audience’s time, contemporary to the author, i.e. the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁸ The name, New Troy, then recalls the legendary foundation of Britain by means of the mythical founder, the Trojan Brutus (from whom the names Britons and Britain were said to derive), which is also remembered by the judge (ll. 207-211). This legend was first recorded by Nennius in his *Historia Brittonum* and later by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, but it was also a theme dear to the Alliterative Revival movement, as witnessed by its presence in such poems as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or *Wynnere and Wastoure*. In the poem, the memory of London’s ancient designation as “New Troy” (ll. 25, 211, 251, 255) is not merely a literary reference; rather, it serves to highlight the city’s British heritage and to strengthen the sense of connection to a Celtic past within fourteenth-century England. The inscription placed in the cathedral, where similar dates were recorded, may have aimed to achieve the same effect:

A sign installed in the cathedral sometime before 1366 measured the intervals between important moments in England’s (and particularly London’s) past and present. The intervals included, among others,

⁸ My theoretical reference is Bridgeman (2005).

those since the foundation of London by Brutus (2,405 years), the foundation of St Paul's (741 years), the conversion of the English by St Augustine of Canterbury (751 years) and the death of Arthur (700 years) (Smith 1997: 161).

The audience of the poem, as well as the visitor in the cathedral, is confronted by the presence of history in the everyday: those temporal points of reference became an index of London's symbolic identity in which the fourteenth-fifteenth century English recognised their British roots. Not only was the judge a Briton but also the listener or reader of *Saint Erkenwald* as a Londoner was the heir to the Britons and to Christianity.

5. Conclusion

The way we construct our discourse reveals our stance, our perspectives and our intentions, but also "make[s] [words] mean what [we] want them to mean" (Taylor 1942: 555). In other words, through language a different perspective of an issue can be constructed and thus influence an audience's opinion or actions (Mull – Wallin 2013: 5). "Discourse constitutes society and culture", and at the same time it does ideological work (Fairclough – Wodak 1997: 271-280).

In the present paper, I have tried to show that the poem *Saint Erkenwald* cannot be simply considered as a hagiographic text. Thanks to a sophisticated use of content and grammatical words, the author offers a response for his contemporary audience⁹ to some of the main concerns characterizing his time, and intends to strengthen his view. Two are the main topics on which the author's attention is concentrated, and which are highlighted by the use of the capital letters, as they flag a particular reading of the text. They mark the historical excursus of the (re-)Christianization of Britain and the section dedicated to the encounter with the right Judge and his salvation through baptism, so that the two parts are distinct yet at

⁹ In this perspective it appears to be totally justified that the people facing the miracle are depicted in detail and almost represent each segment of the community of London in the fourteenth and fifteenth century: nobles (*mony a gay grete lorde*), lords (*lordes*), bourgeois (*burgeys*), functionaries (*clerke*), journeymen, apprentices (*laddes*), masons (*macers*), masons (*masone*) and excavators (*grubber*), heralds (*bedels*), workmen (*werke-men*), churchmen (*sextene, prebate, ministres, dene, bishop*), masters of various arts (*mony a masters mon of maners dyuese*), the mayor and his collaborators (*pe maire wt mony magti mene*).

the same time united. Thus, the first and clearest achievement is to assess the importance of the church's role in the administration of the sacrament, and of the baptism in an individual's salvation through his version of the legend of the righteous pagan and of the process of the Christianization of England depicted as a purification of the sins of paganism. Here the theme of baptism administered by a representative of the institution of the Church (either St Augustine for London or St Erkenwald for the judge) pervades the entire poem by means of a special selection of words connected with or evoking the ritual of baptism. Thanks to an expert use of adverbs and temporal cross-references, the entire narration is temporally situated on shifting levels to such an extent that the historical Celtic past of England gets incorporated into the author's Christian present: thus the author makes his contemporaries feel themselves to be heirs of the Britons, as Christians, that is, carrying the same religious (and social) values. In this respect, *Saint Erkenwald* is in dialogue with several poems of the Alliterative Revival, in particular with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, allegedly written by the same author (Savage 1926).

In other words, the poem written at the end of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, that is at the end of Richard II's reign (Vezzosi 2019b, 2020), acts as a propaganda instrument to strengthen and form the national identity of the new English society based on the Christianity and its institutions, called into question by religious renewal movements, and on the continuity of the legacy of the Britons to cement and reinforce the present of the crown in peripheral regions such as Ireland and Wales.

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Propaganda in 17th-century pamphlets on Jamaica: A corpus-assisted discourse study (1655-1700)¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines features of propaganda discourse in a corpus of 17th-century English pamphlets about the settlement in Jamaica (PonJ_corpus) from 1655 to 1700. Drawing upon Taylor's definition of propaganda as "the deliberate attempt to persuade people to think or behave in a desired way" (2003: 12), the study investigates how pamphlets were crafted to encourage migration to the new colony. By analysing discourse strategies that highlight the colony's economic potential, this paper combines corpus-based methods with discourse analysis, interpreting quantitative data within the socio-political context of the time. The findings demonstrate how collocational patterns surrounding key terms contribute to the 'spin' of the message, aiming to shape readers' perceptions and behaviours toward migration.

Keywords: 17th-century pamphlets, propaganda, Jamaica, readership, corpus-assisted discourse analysis.

1. Introduction

After the conquest of Ireland and Scotland, Cromwell was eager to expand the British maritime power into Spanish America. His ambitious plan – known as the Western Design – envisaged the occupation of Hispaniola, a large and resource-rich island in the middle of the Caribbean which represented a considerable source of wealth for Spain. The expedition failed

¹ I would like to thank the referees for their helpful comments. All remaining errors are my own.

miserably and in order to compensate for the fiasco the troops fell back on Jamaica, a poorly defended Spanish island, not far from Hispaniola. From the day of the occupation, 10th May 1655, the island remained a British possession, becoming a crucial commercial base on the Atlantic route and a permanent British beachhead in the Spanish sector of the Caribbean. Even so, the transformation of a Spanish Jamaica into a British colony was a long and arduous process which required an intense propaganda campaign in order to persuade people both of the legitimacy of the occupation and the profitability of a new life on the island. Indeed, troops and the early settlers experienced all sorts of misery and distress after their arrival: famine, disease and repeated guerrilla attacks on the part of Spanish settlers and Afro-Caribbean bands caused the death of more than two thirds of the army. The circulation of stories about the misery and high mortality in Jamaica was an issue that the Protectorate, first, and the restored monarchy later on, tried hard to hinder through the spreading of optimistic promotional accounts.

By drawing upon Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 48), I consider propaganda as a form of communication which uses both informative and persuasive tools to promote its own objectives by controlling the flow of information, managing public opinion and manipulating behaviours. From the early exploration of Virginia, at the turn of the 17th century, authorities incentivized the circulation of propaganda pamphlets in the attempt to alter people's perceptions of the newly occupied territories and their indigenous population. Pamphleteers combined a language of abundance, diversity and wonder with pervasive references to the natives' lack of civilization in order to persuade English readers of the legitimacy of the conquest and the benefits of migrating to the new settlement (Cecconi 2020). In the present study, therefore, special attention is given to the language through which late 17th-century accounts of Jamaica were presented to the public. To this purpose, the focus is on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the linguistic features adopted to construct a positive or negative spin around the information.

In order to analyse the colonial rhetoric of the time, a corpus of late 17th-century pamphlets on Jamaica was compiled for the years from 1655 to 1700. The specialised corpus aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Which are the most frequent keywords in the corpus?
- 2) How do words and clusters encode the propaganda message of the author?

Results will show that pamphlets on Jamaica maintain features of the colonial rhetoric of the early 17th century with some differences related to the specific

context of the conquest. As a matter of fact, the equation between indigenous and uninhabited land – on which premises the early settlers established their legal and Christian right to occupy territories in North America – could not hold for an island which was taken away from another European country. New rhetorical strategies were therefore set up in order to delegitimize the Spanish rule in Jamaica and reinforce the legitimacy of the English capture.

2. Propaganda and Early Modern pamphlets

When applying our modern concept of propaganda to historical text types, caution is necessary, as contemporary perceptions may distort our understanding of propaganda in earlier periods. For this reason, I adopt Taylor's approach and define propaganda as a neutral process of persuasion that has existed since human beings first began to communicate. More specifically, propaganda is understood as "the communication of ideas designed to persuade people to think and behave in the desired way" (Taylor 2003: 6). At the core of propaganda lies the concept of intent, which distinguishes it from other forms of persuasion, including education. Propaganda employs a range of discourse strategies to convey messages, ideas, or ideologies intended primarily to serve the self-interests of the propagandists and the institutions behind them, rather than to promote the well-being of the audience (Taylor 2003: 7; Jowett – O'Donnell 2006; Baines – O'Shaughnessy – Snow 2019: xxv). A step further in the theorization of propaganda has been taken by Staal (2019) for whom propaganda is aimed not only at communicating a message but also at constructing reality itself. Drawing upon the model elaborated by Chomsky and Herman (1988), Staal (2019: 2-3) conceives of propaganda as a performance of power in the process of manufacturing consent – that is in the process of shaping a new normative reality that serves not only the interests of élite power but also those of popular mass movements.

When we study how propaganda was actualized in early modern discourse, considerations about the historical and socio-cultural context of the time become of paramount importance. In his history of propaganda, Taylor considers the advent of the printing press in the middle of the 15th century as the most appropriate dividing line between medieval and modern propaganda. As a matter of fact, Gutenberg's invention determined a gradual shift from script to print which incentivized a massive growth in literary persuasions of all kinds and progressively paved the way for the shaping of

mass propaganda as we know it today. Thanks to the proliferation of books and cheap print representations of religious and political wars, expeditions to the New World and colonization became increasingly accessible to the English people.

Contrary to our modern ideal of objective reporting, 17th-century news discourse was deeply imbued with persuasion. As Greenspan (2012: 6) observes, "17th-century editors, journalists, and pamphleteers set out not simply to impart information but to engage in interpretative contexts and advocate particular points of view". This is clearly demonstrated in Brownlee's (2006a) study of polemic and propaganda in Civil War serial pamphlets, where the propaganda strategies of the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus* and the parliamentarian *Mercurius Britanicus* are thoroughly examined in relation to the aims and political standpoints of the two editors. Similarly, in the present paper, propaganda is investigated in relation to the a priori objectives of the government, which appropriated forms of mass communication to construct narratives favourable to its expansionist designs. Some texts, such as declarations, proclamations, and regulations, were transparently official, aiming to establish normative behaviour, while others camouflaged their official origins to create the illusion of spontaneous and therefore authentic communication. Most of these ostensibly unbiased publications were presented as first-hand accounts of Jamaica in pamphlet format and form the core of my study.

Occasional pamphlets were stitched quarto books of not more than twelve sheets, a length which helped to limit the cost of the product. Although towards the end of the century, the retail price was nearer a penny a sheet and a work of a dozen sheets could rise to as much as one shilling (Raymond 2003: 83), pamphlets continued to circulate among the lower sorts. Their ubiquity was ensured by the practice of considering these products as a sort of common property which was continuously exchanged, borrowed and passed on (Walsham 1999: 34). Pamphlets were read aloud in circles of friends and neighbours or in local centres of sociability from the Royal Exchange to St Paul's Churchyard, from coffee-houses to barber shops. Their oral transmission ensured that the content reached a large spectrum of society: from the humble receiver to the middle and upper ranking buyer. This was crucial for colonial pamphlets which needed to address both targets in the attempt to ensure the human resources and financial investments required for the maintenance of the possession. Because of their quite heterogenous and composite character (Brownlee 2006b), pamphlets can be considered a macro-genre predicated on the borrowing and combination

of different text-types. In the case of colonial pamphlets on Jamaica, texts comprise descriptions, historical accounts, practical advice, maps, minutes, official documents and letters which perfectly exemplify the hybrid nature of the genre (Raymond 2003).

As propaganda vehicles, early modern pamphlets shed significant light on the political and socio-cultural assumptions of their contemporaries. A propagandist must, in fact, conform to the preconceptions and prejudices of the audience in order to achieve their goal. As Harris (1987: 97) observes, “to be effective, a propagandist must know the sentiments and opinions, the current tendencies and stereotypes among the people he is trying to reach, and appeal to them in such a way as to win individuals over to his cause”. In this sense, most propaganda reflects (and, to some extent, constructs) the common opinions of the age. By focusing on 17th-century pamphlets on Jamaica within the context of the London print market, it is possible to identify the prejudices and assumptions the pamphleteer seeks to emphasize, to determine whether the author attempts to imbue preconceptions with new meanings, and, finally, to assess what impact such arguments were likely to have on different groups of consumers.

3. Corpus and methodology

In order to answer the research questions outlined in the introduction, a corpus of 15 pamphlets on Jamaica (PonJ) dating from 1655 to 1700 and consisting of 211,974 words was compiled. The texts forming the corpus were taken from the *Early English Books Online* archive and selected by searching for the word *Jamaica* in the title. All the texts are accounts containing eyewitness descriptions, instructions to new settlers, narratives of the victory of the Protectorate over the Spanish forces, reportage of the Spanish cruelties over the Indians, tracts on the health conditions and presentation of the legal system confirmed by the king. The works of PonJ are listed in Table 1.

Drawing upon Partington (2004, 2009), I investigated my corpus by adopting the principles of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). CADS allows for the use of concordance technology applied to large amounts of linguistic evidence available in corpora in order to enhance the study of discourse features of particular genres, of the language and of the strategies used by authors to pursue their communicative aims (Partington 2004: 12). In the present study, this methodology enables us to identify units of discourse used to construct realities which fit the propaganda aims of the author.

Table 1. Works in PonJ

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	WORDS
Anon.	1655	<i>A brief and perfect journal of the late proceedings and successes of the English army in the West-Indies, continued until June the 24th 1655: Together with some quæres inserted and answered. Published for satisfaction of all such who desire truly to be informed in these particulars. / By I.S. an eye-witnesse</i>	10,558
Oliver Cromwell	1655	<i>By the Protector, a proclamation giving encouragement to such as shall transplant themselves to Jamaica</i>	1,472
Bartolomé de las Casas (trans. by J. P.)	1656	<i>The tears of the Indians being an historical and true account of the cruel massacres and slaughters of above twenty millions of innocent people, committed by the Spaniards in the islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c</i>	28,498
Anon.	1657	<i>A true description of Jamaica with the fertility, commodities, and healthfulness of the place. As also the towns, havens, creeks, promontories, and the circuit of the whole island.</i>	915
Edward Doyley	1658	<i>A narrative of the great success God hath been pleased to give His Highness forces in Jamaica, against the King of Spains forces; together with a true relation of the Spaniards losing their plate-fleet, as it was communicated in a letter from the Governour of Jamaica.</i>	1,435
Edward Doyley	1659	<i>A brief relation of a victory, obtained by the forces under the command of Gen. Edward Doyley, commander in chief of his Highnesse's forces in the island of Jamaica. Against the forces of the king of Spain, commanded by Don Christopher Arnaldo Sasi, commander in chief of the Spanish forces there</i>	1,200
Edmund Hickersingill	1661	<i>Jamaica viewed with all the ports, harbours, and their several soundings, towns, and settlements thereunto belonging together, with the nature of it's climate, fruitfulness of the soile, and its suitableness to English complexions.</i>	11,256

Richard Blome and Thomas Lynch	1672	<i>A Description of the Island of Jamaica, with the Other Isles and Territories in America, to which the English are Related</i>	20,038
Thomas Trapham	1678	<i>A discourse of the state of health in the island of Jamaica with a provision therefore calculated from the air, the place, and the water, the customs and manner of living &c</i>	32,443
Governor of Jamaica, Sir Thomas Lynch	1682	<i>A narrative of the affairs lately received from His Majesties island of Jamaica</i>	2,965
Anon.	1683	<i>The Present State of Jamaica. With the Life of the Great Columbus the First Discoverer</i>	16,817
Francis Hanson	1683	<i>The laws of Jamaica passed by the assembly, and confirmed by His majesty in council, Feb. 23. 1683: to which is added, A short account of the island and government thereof, with an exact map of the island</i>	40,108
Thomas Tryon	1684	<i>Friendly advice to the gentlemen-planters of the East and West Indies In three parts.</i>	35,727
Rev. Emmanuel Heath	1692	<i>A full account of the late dreadful earth-quake at Port-Royal in Jamaica, written in two letters from the minister of that place, from aboard the Granada in Port-Royal Harbour, June 22. 1692.</i>	2,168
Edward Ward	1699	<i>A trip to Jamaica with a true character of the people and island / by the author of Sot's paradise.</i>	6,374

The analysis starts with the elaboration of a keyword list by applying WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott 2022) to PonJ. Keywords are calculated by comparing the frequency of each word in the wordlist obtained from PonJ (i.e. the target corpus) with the frequency of the same word/s in the wordlist generated from the *Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts* (1640-1740) which functions as reference corpus (RC).² The words which appear in the keyword list are those whose frequency in PonJ is unusually high in comparison with their frequency in the reference corpus.

² *The Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts* is compiled by Josef Schmied, Claudia Claridge and Rainer Siemund (1999) and amounts to 1,193,385 words. It contains 120 pamphlets belonging to the domains of religion, politics, science, law and miscellaneous. It is available on ICAME and Oxford Text Archive.

From the keyword list obtained, I selected the four most frequent nouns and I investigated their most frequent clusters³ in concordances by taking into account both their cotext and the wider socio-political context in which they occur (Brownlees 2015: 7). As a matter of fact, clusters allow us “to look not only at the immediate environment (cotext) of a search-word but also to link it outwards to the wider meaning context” (Samson 2021: 44). Furthermore, different situational contexts develop their own favourite clusters, which acquire a unique connotational meaning and persuasive force in that particular cotext. This is why the interlacement between word/s, cotext and context is of paramount importance in order to identify and assess meaning-making in a text.

4. Analysis

The four most frequent keywords in the corpus – *island*, *Spaniards*, *Jamaica*, *Indians* – were extracted from the keyword list and are reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The most frequent keywords in PonJ

No.	KEYWORD	PonJ FREQ.	%	RC FREQ.	%	P
1	ISLAND	595	0,28%	110	–	0,0000000000
2	SPANIARDS	333	0,16%	119	0,01%	0,0000000000
3	JAMAICA	223	0,10%	18	–	0,0000000000
4	INDIANS	199	0,09%	41	–	0,0000000000

The first column reports the keyword; the second shows its frequency in PonJ; the third the percentage of the keyword frequency; the fourth the keyword frequency in RC; the fifth the percentage of the keyword frequency in RC and the last column features the p. value, that indicates the statistical significance of the results obtained (cf. Samson 2021).

³ Clusters can be defined as multi-word units consisting of two, three, four (or more) words which occur frequently in a given corpus so as to form a recurrent lexico-syntactic pattern (Hunston 2011: 5).

4.1 *Island*

The most frequent clusters for the keyword *Island* are *of this island/of the island* (213 occurrences), followed by *within this island/in this island* (103 occurrences). The first pair of clusters has different collocational preferences: *of this island* is a postmodifier of noun phrases related to the island's administration/regulations and features the words *government* (24 occurrences), *mon(e)y* (28 occurrences) and *seal* (14 occurrences) as their most frequent left-hand collocates, whereas *of the island* is a postmodifier of noun phrases related to the geographical description of the island and features the words *description* (12 occurrences), *North/South side* (14 occurrences), *part(s)* (11 occurrences) as the most frequent left-hand collocates. Examples of the cluster *of this island* are provided below:

- (1) Provided also that the aforesaid Penalties mentioned in this Act, and not declared where they shall be Recovered, or how Disposed of, be one half to Our Sovereign Lord the King, for and towards *the Support of the Government of this Island*, and the Contingent Charges thereof.

(The Laws of Jamaica, 1683)

- (2) and whosoever shall by Publick and open Profaness or Blasphemy Dishonour Almighty God, and be thereof duly Convicted in the Supream Court of Judicature, shall be Fined *Twenty pounds Currant Money of this Island*, or more, at the Discretion of the Court for every such Offence.

(The Laws of Jamaica, 1683)

- (3) Forasmuch as by the Laws of this Island no due and condign Punishment hath been heretofore provided for such as shall falsify, forge or counterseit *his Majestys Broad Seal of this Island*, by reason whereof diverse evil disposed persons may be emboldened to perpetrate and commit the said Offence, to the dishonour of his Majesty, and the disinheriting of many of his Majestys good Subjects.

(The Laws of Jamaica, 1683)

Most of the occurrences are found in the highly influential pamphlet *The Laws of Jamaica* by Francis Hanson who meticulously reports the laws and regulations of Jamaica with detailed references to pecuniary punishment in case of offence. The lexico-syntactic patterns in examples (1) and (2) are meant to exhibit guarantee of law and order on the island as pre-condition

for the social stability, personal safety and economic prosperity of the new settlers. Furthermore, these acts and regulations for “the better Government of the Plantation” were interpreted as an extension of “all the Laws and Privileges of Englishmen exercised and continued amongst us there” (*The Laws of Jamaica*, 1683). The assumption according to which the Anglo-Jamaica colonists were enjoying the same rights and liberties as English freemen was at the centre of a propaganda campaign designed to highlight the king’s goodwill towards Jamaica so as to reassure potential settlers at home and incentivize their migration to the colony.⁴

Another token of the king’s commitment to the colony was the seal which testified to his royal grant of a “true coat of Arms” and his self-proclamation as Lord of Jamaica (example 3). Given the controversial capture of the island under Cromwell’s regime, there was great anxiety about Charles II’s position in relation to the occupation. The monarchy, which defended its right to rule through legitimacy, left the legal status of the conquest uncertain for a while and this sparked rumours that the island would not be retained for long. State propaganda promptly intervened in the debate by providing evidence of royal sympathy towards Jamaica. This bond of affection was discursively constructed through the lexico-syntactic proximity between *Majesty/ King* and *island* in the pattern: *to* [Our Sovereign Lord the King] *for and towards the support of the government of this island* (23 occurrences), as shown in example 1; *under the* [kings/Majesties] *Great/broad seal of this island* (6 occurrences) as shown in example 3 and in the cluster [His Majesties] *island of Jamaica* (7 occurrences) as we can see below:

- (4) A true Account and Relation of this last Expedition against the Spaniard, by virtue of a Commission given unto H. Morgan by his Excel Sir Tho. Modyford Governour General of His Majesties Island of Jamaica.

(*The Present State of Jamaica*, 1683)

While late 17th-century propaganda for the settlement in Jamaica enhanced the power and benevolence of the king with more than 140 references to *His Majesty/ies*, PonJ shows only 4 instances of the word *Cromwell* and all occurring

⁴ In line with the propaganda campaign for the representation of the king’s affection for Jamaica, in his preface to *The Laws of Jamaica* Hanson wrote that since Charles “was pleased to own what his subjects had done [...] when he came to exercise his Royal Authority”, then this “was the same as if he had commissioned them” (in Robertson 2002b: 37).

in the same pamphlet. This silence is indicative of the problematization inherent in the representation of a usurper as the do-er of the most significant English conquest in the West Indies.⁵ Through deliberate omission of information and through the foregrounding of the king's role in the gracious retention of Jamaica, Restoration propaganda endeavoured to transform Cromwell's Design into a Royal Conquest (Robertson 2002a: 820). Even in the anonymous pamphlet *The Present State of Jamaica* (1683) where Cromwell is named, any honorification is denied and the Lord Protector's role is minimized by 1) the reference to the failed attempt on Hispaniola (example 5); 2) the focus on Col. D'Oyley who completed the military conquest and became the first governor of the new royal colony (example 6);⁶ 3) the narrative of his death before the completion of the Design and the consequential shift of praise attribution from him to the Englishmen (example 7):

- (5) But *Cromwell* sent his Army to seize *Spaniola*, or some place that was convenient for a Collony and seat of War, *he having mist* St. Domingo they resolved to fix here.

(*The Present State of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (6) and *Cromwell* having sent Capt. *Mints* in a Third Rate Frigate, Capt. *Heytub* in a Fifth, and Capt. *Heylin* in a Sixth, Col. *Doyley* puts on Board them 300 Souldiers Comanded by Major *Wilbraham*, Capt. *Thomas Morgan*, and Capt. *Linch*, these being got high enough to wind-ward, Landed and took *Cumana*.

(*The Present State of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (7) The latter end of this year Col. *Doyley* sent to *Cromwell* 10 or 12 Colours as Marks and Trophies of this Victory. But the Messenger Col. *Barry* found him *Dead: so he never had one syllable of any thing that was grateful from the vastest Expencc and greatest Design that was ever made by the English.*

(*The Present State of Jamaica*, 1683)

The second cluster of *the island* is linked to the geography of Jamaica (including position, resources, towns and transportation). Example (8) highlights

⁵ Richard Blome's *Description of Jamaica* was republished in 1678 with the elimination of a section which had appeared in 1672, so as to avoid any reference to Cromwell (Robertson 2002b: 38)

⁶ According to the revisionist narrative, Colonel Doyley did not enjoy Cromwell's favour, which made him a perfect candidate for a Royalist appropriation.

the natural resources of the island and example (9) describes the network of transportation which allows for the easy circulation of commodities. In both cases the keyword *island* is surrounded by a rhetoric of abundance and profitability (e.g. *excel, bounty, great abundance, for the most part, other, another*) which has the twofold aim of luring lower classes with the prospect of a profitable life in the colony and encouraging middle- and upper-class investors to seize the opportunities opened up by transoceanic commerce, especially after the Restoration (Minchinton 2023 [1969]). Below are some examples:

- (8) The compass or circuit *of the Island* is an hundred and fifty leagues; its length from East to West is fifty leagues, the bredth is twenty, or better. This Island *excels* the others for the goodness both of the Ayr, and *bounty* of the soyl, it is *for the most part* a plain and even Country, yeilding in *great abundance* whatsoever is necessary for mans life.

(*A True Description of Jamaica*, 1657)

- (9) Farther West is *Bluefields Bay*, and *other good Roads*, and the like there is also in St. *James's*, St. *Anns*, and St. *Maries*, on the *North side of the Island*, and in the Parish of St. *Georges* in the North-East parts, is *Port Antonio, a safe and good Harbour, and such another in the South-East part* [...] So that there want not conveniencies *for the Importing or Exporting of their Commodities, in any part of the Country*.

(*The Laws of Jamaica*, 1683)

While the first pair of clusters focuses on what belongs to Jamaica, the second group, i.e. *within this island* and *in the island* encodes what is to be found in the place. Once again, the pair shows a preference for aspects of legislation and resources respectively. The cluster *within this island* (59 occurrences) appears in the account of regulations and institutions. As the mutineer Edward Tyson declared: “these civil institutions created a context in which men could make a firm and lasting commitment [in the new colony]” (Pestana 2017: 234). This can be seen in the following examples where references are made to the institutional role of Assemblies and Admiralty:

- (10) It is hereby Enacted by the Authority of the same, that *in every Assembly* hereafter to be called by His Majesties Writs, and held *within this Island*, there be Chosen Three Representatives for the Parish of St. *Catharines*, the like number for the Parish of *Port Royal*, and Two for each other of the respective Parishes that now are, or hereafter shall be in this Island.

(*The Laws of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (11) Felonies, and other Offences upon the Sea, shall be Apprehended in, or brought Prisoners to this Island, Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all Treasons, Felonies, Piracies, Robberies, Murthers, or Confederacies committed, or that hereafter shall be committed upon the Sea, or in any Haven, Creek, or Bay, where *the Admiral* hath Jurisdiction, shall be Inquired, Tryed, Heard, Determined, and Judged *within this Island*, in such like form, as if such Offence had been Committed in and upon the Land, and to that end and purpose Commissions shall be had under the Kings Great Seal of this Island, directed to the *Judge or Judges of the Admiralty* of this Island for the time being.

(*The Laws of Jamaica*, 1683)

The cluster *in this island* (44 occurrences), on the other hand, is mostly used in descriptions of the commodities of the island, as shown in examples (12, 13, 14, 15, 16):

- (12) *Hoggs* are here in *exceeding great plenty*, as well those wild in the *Mountains*, as tame in the *Plantations*, whose *Flesh* is far better tasted, and *more nourishing and easier* to be digested then those of *England*; which is the reason that it is *so much* eaten *in this Island*.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (13) I shall not mention here *the plenty of all sorts* of Fish, and wild Fowl, as *Ginney Hens*, *Ducks*, wild *Pigeons*, &c. because these Collections shall take notice onely of what is singular *in this Island*, without a Copartner, or any Parallel in any other Settlements of our Countrey men.

(*Jamaica viewed*, 1661)

- (14) *There are great plenty of choise and excellent* Fruits *in this Island*, as *Oranges*, *Pome-granates*, *Cocar-Nuts*, *Limes*, *Guavars*, *Mammes*, *Alumee-Supotas*, *Suppotillias*, *Avocatas*, *Cashues*, *Prickle-Aples*, *Prickle-Pears*, *Grapes*, *Sower-Sops*, *Custard-Aples*, *Dildowes*, *and many others whose names are not known, or too tedious to name*, besides *Plantains*, *Pines*, &c.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (15) *In this Island* are *abundance of* Medicinal Herbs, Roots, and Plants. We have *Venillaes*; here's *China*, *Sarsaparilla*, *Gum Guaicum*, *Benjamin*, &c.

(*The Present state of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (16) *In this Island are many* convenient Harbours for Shipping, *besides several* Bays and Roads fitting for the landing or takeing off of Goods: The chiefest of these is *Port-Royal*, which in its safety for Shipping, depth of Water cleanness of Ground, and conveniency of the Shore and Wharfs, for lading and unlading of Shipping, may compare with any in the known World.

(*Jamaica viewed*, 1661)

The majority of the quotations features the patterns: [resources] + *in this island* or *in this island* + [resources] and all examples are characterized by a rhetoric of abundance (*great plenty of*), diversity (*many others, several*) and highly positive semantics (*excellent*) which recall the language of exaggeration and opulence characteristic of the early 17th-century promotional pamphlets on Virginia (Cecconi 2020). The premodifier *great* is the most frequent adjective in PonJ and has *plenty* (23 occurrences), *quantities* (13 occurrences), *variety* (13 occurrences), *store* (13 occurrences), *abundance* (11 occurrences) and *numbers* (10 occurrences) among its most frequent first right-hand collocates (R1). The quantifiers *many* (404 occurrences) and *much* (328 occurrences) commonly cluster with the intensifier *so* (149 occurrences) and *other(s)* (38 occurrences) in order to reinforce the impression of plenitude and diversity that the island affords in terms of food, trade products, towns and transportation. A similar function is performed by the intensifier *several* (197 occurrences) in the pattern *several* + [NP] (154 occurrences), *several sorts of* + [NP] (13 occurrences), *several other* + [noun in the plural] (8 occurrences) and [NP] + *for several uses* (5 occurrences). Amongst the other things, *several* premodifies commodities (e.g. *fruits, plantations, liquors*), buildings (e.g. *houses, alehouses, store-houses, hackney coaches, utensils*) and geographical features of the island such as bays, harbours, rivers, towns and streets as marker of profitable life and commerce.

Comparatives as markers of grammatical evaluation are also frequent, the most typical token being *better* (165 occurrences), occasionally intensified by *much* and *far* (15 occurrences), as shown in example (12). The comparison with England and the New World is a common persuasive strategy in 17th-century colonial pamphlets and is functional to advertising the better quality of products and commodities in comparison with those already known. Another linguistic feature shared with previous colonial literature is the so called “exhaustive itemization” (Cox 1994) which constructs the perception of a healthy and productive life in the colony through lists of items. As we can see in examples (13), (14) and (15) the hypernym (e.g. *fowls*,

fruits, medicinal herbs) is followed by lists of multifarious commodities which creates people's positive perception of the material abundance offered by the island. As Lonati (2020: 244) notices, by being lexicalized as concrete products, colonies themselves become geographical and material commodities of profitable commerce and prosperous life.

One last consideration regards the use of the deictic *this* in the clusters of *this island*, *within this island* and *in this island* (235 occurrences) as quantitatively more salient than the determiner *the* in the corresponding patterns (100 occurrences). The demonstrative determiner conveys the meaning of "nearness" and is part of a grammar of space which uses the author's location on the island (or its a posteriori reconstruction) as deictic centre (Levinson 1983). The spatial proximity between the author and the island appears to be projected onto readers so as to discursively enact their future settlement on the island. Furthermore, through the repetition of *this*, the reader has the impression of being positioned in the spatial scene of Jamaica sharing the vantage point of the author.

4.2 *Spaniards*

The second keyword in order of frequency is *Spaniards*. The word occurs in two major lexico-syntactic patterns: [verb of action indicating murder, violence and destruction] + *by the Spaniards* (23 occurrences) and *Spaniards* + [verb of action indicating murder and destruction] (22 occurrences). In both cases *Spaniards* carries a strong negative semantic prosody⁷ which is aimed at delegitimizing their rule on the island by exploiting and re-adapting the 16th-century Black Legend of the Spanish cruelty towards the Indians. The tactic was designed to nourish anti-Spanish sentiment, which had been circulating in England since the signing of the Treaty of Nonsuch (1585) during Elizabeth I's reign. The treaty had committed England to supporting the Dutch rebels against Spain and was followed by Philip II's dispatch of the Spanish Armada (1588). The prejudice against the Spaniards was further reinforced by perceptions of their 'black', miscegenated nature, attributed to their Moorish and Jewish heritage (Bhaduri 2018: 151). Propaganda discourse thus appealed to a pre-existing Hispanophobia, intensifying it by perpetuating the image of the Spanish colonizer as cruel and un-Christian.

⁷ Semantic prosody is defined by Louw as that "consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (1993: 159). Words can acquire favourable or unfavourable prosodies as a result of the collocational company they keep.

After the conquest of Jamaica, the demonization of the Spanish was instrumental in legitimizing the English occupation of the island. Authors indulged in the dramatic and sensational reporting of the Spaniards' ill-treatment of the indigenous Taino so as to construct the victory of Protestant England as a divine verdict on Spanish-Popish misrule (Robertson 2002b). This is shown in the following examples:

- (17) [...] perhaps it was formerly very populous with Indians, but *those were destroyed by the Spaniards*, so that we have no Natives at present but Children of the English, or their Negro Slaves.

(*The Laws of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (18) he [Cromwell] having mist St. Domingo they resolved to fix here; nor were they like to be beaten out, for there was not many Native Indians left, they *being long before destroy'd by the Spaniards*.

(*The Present state of Jamaica*, 1683)

- (19) Now there is so much to be said concerning the *slaughters and devastations made by the Spaniards*, so many stories to be reckoned up, as would be hardly contained in writing, it being impossible to set down one thing of a hundred.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

- (20) In these ten or twelve years, what with Men, Women, Youths, and Children, above four millions were *by the Spaniards consumed* part by fire, part by the sword in these destructive wars; wars more unjust and more condemn'd both by the Law of God and men, then any invasion of the Turk against the Catholique Religion.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

The majority of references to the Spanish brutality occurs in the pamphlet *Tears of Indians*, the English translation of the famous 16th-century work by Bartolomé de las Casa who harshly denounced the tyrannical behaviour of the Catholic Spanish towards the Indians. Interestingly, the translation was published in 1656 one year after Cromwell's troops landed in Jamaica. All subsequent English narratives of the Spanish conduct are framed within the paradigm of massacre and destruction provided by De Las Casas, as the following examples show:

- (21) When the *Spaniards* became *Masters* of the *Isle*, they converted to *Pasture* for the feeding of their *Cattel*; bringing hither from Spain,

Horses, Cows, Hogs, and *Asenegros* for a Breed, *after they had destroyed all the Natives, or Indians, which according to calculation, did amount to about 60000.*

(*A Description of the island*, 1672)

- (22) The *Spaniards*, who baptized the *New World* in *Blood*, murdered many *Hundred Thousand Indians*, on pretence of propagating the Christian Religion, when in truth it was only to get *Gold* and *Empire*.

(*Friendly Advice*, 1684)

The use of numbers, albeit approximate, functions as a truth-authenticating device which enhances the persuasive force of the dysphemistic representation of the Spaniards as bearers of evil and tyranny. As van Dijk claims, it is not so much the exactness of these numbers that is important but rather the fact that they are given at all (1988: 87). Readers are, in fact, led to assume that reporters capable of providing such figures must have had first-hand knowledge as to what happened (Brownlees 2011: 87). In this way, their reportage is likely to be accepted as true and the change of perception and behaviour promoted by the government becomes much more feasible as a result.

Another repeated cluster for Spaniards is *against the Spaniards* (7 occurrences) which encodes the ideological polarization between Protestant English entitled to inhabit the territory vs the Catholic Spaniards as embodiment of the Anti-Christ. After representing the Indians as victims of the Spanish brutality, the English appropriation of Spanish Jamaica is re-interpreted as providential for the few indigenous people left or, at least, as an indisputable sign of God's just revenge against the Spanish. Once the Spaniards have been labelled as perpetrators of death and oppression, the encoding of the English as their opponents turns them into true Christian liberators (Pestana 2017: 16) and contributes to the assumption that their rule is legitimized by God and as such is to be preferred to the Spanish one:

- (23) *The English* being thus become Masters of the *Island*, formed themselves into a Body, or Colony: Then did they they begin to settle themselves in *Plantations*, whilst others betook themselves to the Sea as *Freebooters* or *Privateers*, the better *to secure themselves against the Spaniards*.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (24) [...] a little Fleet of *English men*, fitted out from the *Chariby* Islands, chiefly from Sr. *Kits*, under the Command of Gen. *Jackson*, who landed about five hundred men at *Passage-Fort*, and fought his way up to the Town, *against two thousand Spaniards*, who still fled before him.

(*Jamaica viewed*, 1661)

4.3 Jamaica

The third most frequent keyword is Jamaica occurring in the clusters *Island of Jamaica* (24), *Majesties Island of Jamaica* (12), *the air of Jamaica* (10). The first cluster is characteristic of the title and preface of pamphlets. It is mostly found in the lexico-syntactic pattern *a description of the Island of Jamaica* (6 occurrences). The metadiscursive term “description” conveys the meaning of objective and unbiased account, thus cancelling or, at least, partly camouflaging the propaganda intent of the author:

- (25) It is necessary I should say something in relation to the following Matter: I do not therein present you with a formal *Journal* of my Voyage, or *Geographical Description* of the *Island* of *Jamaica*, for that has been already done by Persons better Qualified for such a Task.

(*A Trip to Jamaica*, 1699)

- (26) I shall therefore now conclude, only including brief description of the *Island of Jamaica*, by comparing it (in divers respects) with *Hispaniola*, together with some few passages by the way homeward.

(*A brief and perfect Journal*, 1655)

The second cluster was already mentioned when examining the keyword *island*. It features the discursive proximity between *His Majesties* and *Jamaica* which is functional to the Royalist appropriation of the Cromwellian Design after the Restoration:

- (27) A NARRATIVE OF AFFAIRS Lately received from *his MAJESTIES Island of Iamaica*.

(*A Narrative of the Affairs*, 1682)

The emphasis on the bond between the king and Jamaica is not only dictated by the need to rewrite the Republican past but also by the necessity to respond to people’s concern about the precariousness of the colony. As a matter of fact, until 1670 Jamaica was still exposed to threats of Spanish

attacks, as documented by the lexicon of war surrounding the cluster (e.g. *war, expedition, magazines of arms, ammunitions or provisions*) and this vulnerability required a constant reassurance, on the part of the British government, that everything would be done in support and defence of the colony.

The third cluster for Jamaica is *the air of Jamaica*, mainly found in the pamphlet *A Discourse of the State of the Health in Jamaica* written by an English doctor living in Jamaica.

- (28) Hence to conclude this Chapter of *the air of Jamaica*, the contagious plague is well and maturely prohibited inhabiting our Air, the which, to summ up all, is vifying hot, and multiplyingly moist, incorporating thick, and spirituously brisk and moving, by its nitrosity piercing and cleansing, in *all most proper* to increase life, suitable to the necessity of the place.

(*A Discourse of the State of Health*, 1678)

- (29) *The Air of Jamaica is eminent herein, and therefore most agreeable to women, beneficial to their living, including their conceptions and facilitating their Births*: but yet not so far impregnating, as if they, like the Spanish Ginnets, might be impressed by the Wind to a fruitfulness, without the Airiness of a Male consort.

(*A Discourse of the State of the Health*, 1678)

- (30) That the *Air of Jamaica conduces much to the easie and speedy Cure of the Distemper, by Reason of its nitrous Quality*.

(*A Discourse of the State of the Health*, 1678)

As is the case with the many references to His Majesty's *Jamaica*, the frequency of the cluster *air of Jamaica* is indicative of problematization. As a matter of fact, widespread rumours about the intolerable heat of the island had had a negative effect on people and discouraged plans to migrate. The propaganda machine was therefore set in motion to counter these narratives by exploiting the authority of eye-witnesses and experts. The air of Jamaica was positively evaluated as having beneficial effects on the treatment of diseases and on the increase in life-expectancy. In the examples above, the doctor's authoritative viewpoint is encoded in discourse by means of positive evaluative adjectives (often in the superlative) – *most proper, eminent, most agreeable, beneficial, easie and speedy Cure, nitrous Quality* – and positive material verbs – such as *cleansing, increase life, facilitating, conduces* [to a Cure]. The reference to the benefits of the air on births and miscarriage

suggests that the author was targeting English Protestant families rather than male adventurers or vagabonds.⁸ This was in line with the plan to establish a moral and respectable colony. The manipulative character of such a rhetoric becomes evident when we consider that out of the 12,000 Englishmen who had arrived in Jamaica by the time of the Restoration, fewer than 2,500 men and only one thousand women and children survived because of the many climate-related diseases present on the island (Block 2012: 146).

4.4 *Indians*

Indians is the fourth keyword in order of frequency. The word mostly features in the pattern [Quantity] + *of Indians* where the quantity slot is filled in with the words *number(s)* (7 occurrences), *many* (3 occurrences) and *sufficient quantity, eight thousand, a great company, full, certain, a cloud, a great company*, conveying the meaning of abundance as booster of the atrocities committed by the Spaniards. Indeed, the lexico-syntactic pattern is inserted within a semantics of destruction, forced transportation and massacre for which the Indians were primarily represented as done-to (14 occurrences) and the Spanish as merciless do-ers, as we can see in the following examples:

- (31) Into this River entred a perfidious Tyrant, wasting many miles of Land, committing many slaughters, consuming many by fire, and putting *an infinite number of these poor Indians* to the sword, that liv'd peaceably in their own houses without any suspicion of making disturbance.

(The Tears of the Indians, 1656)

- (32) The chief Tyrant, with a nose and lips down to his beard, having call'd together *a great number of Indians*, reported to have been about two hundred, caused them all to have their members lopt off, leaving them in this sad and painful condition, the blood streaming

⁸ The explicit reference to the beneficial effects of the air on women might be due to the fact that white men outnumbered white women by 5.41 to 2.02 by 1673 (Wells 2015: 201). Plausible accounts were therefore produced to persuade English women to leave their county for a healthier life in Jamaica: "if we also consider the nature of the Climate (as it really is), most propitious to Child-bearing Women who are not so subject to Miscarriages, Distempers, Pains or Difficulties before, at or after Delivery, as they are in *England*, for being always Summer, there is no danger of catching colds, nor need of Fires in their Chambers" (*Laws of Jamaica*, 1683).

forth, to be witnesses of the mercy of these persons baptiz'd in the Catholike Faith.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

- (33) I do also affirme that the *Spaniards* got together as *many of the Indians* as possibly they could croud into three houses, and there, upon no occasion given, burnt them to death.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

In only a few cases (4 occurrences) does the pattern [quantity] + *of Indians* feature the Indians as do-ers, at first willing to offer their service to the Spanish and then forced to take revenge or escape:

- (34) Whereupon *an infinite number of the Indians came to the Spaniards* requesting that they might be their subjects, and that they might serve them. The Captain made answer, that he would not receive them, and that moreover he would kill them all unlesse they would declare whither their Lords were fled.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

- (35) & *when a great company of the Indians pursued them with weapons* for the recovery of their Wives and Children, they resolving not to let go their prey, when the *Indians* came near them, immediately with the points of their swords ran the poor Women and Children through the bodies.

(*The Tears of the Indians*, 1656)

To the Indians vs Spaniards opposition nourished by the government-sponsored translation of *The Tears of Indians*, pamphleteers add the positive representation of the peaceful and profitable Anglo-Indian relationship in other parts of the occupied territories as evidence of the beneficial and mutually rewarding presence of the English colonists on the island. In the examples below *English* is found in the proximity of *Indians or they*, the two actors being engaged in harmonious relationship, trade and co-habitation:

- (36) This Countrey [New York] is also possessed with sundry sorts of people, not much unlike the *Indians* of *Virginia*, being well-proportioned, Stout, Swarthy, Black haired, very expert in their *Bow*, and *Arrows*, which are their chief weapons of War. *They are courteous to the English, of a ready Witt, and very apt to receive Instructions from them.*

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (37) The Town is Inhabited by *the English and Dutch, and hath a considerable Trade with the Indians*, for the Skins of Elks, Deer, Bears, &c. also for those of Bever, Otter, and other Furs; and doth likewise enjoy a good Trade with the English.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (38) [...] neglected by the more Northerly and armstrong Regions, whose Character [...] especially of those of *Guiana and Charby Indians, that cohabit with the English in Surinam*, I deem not much extravagant here to insert.

(*Jamaica viewed*, 1661)

In the attempt to delegitimize the validity of the Spanish rule in America, the pamphleteer indulges in a defence of the Native Indians' natural right to their territories. This conformed to the early modern Protestant worldview, according to which the natives' right to their land was considered undisputable, provided the indigenous people converted to the Protestant faith and accepted reformed evangelization, as expressed in John Cotton's sermon to Winthrop's Company, *God's Promise to His Plantation* (1630). The emphasis on the natives' right to their land is framed within a self-celebratory narrative that highlights the Indians' willingness to submit to the superior and benevolent authority of the Protestant English, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (39) *The Indians*, who are the natural proprietors of America, do abominate and *hate the Spaniards for their cruelty and avarice*; and upon every occasion will shew their willingness to give themselves and their Countreys, *freely into the power and protection of the English*.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

- (40) The *Popes Donation* is of little validity, for he hath given them the Crown of *England*, which of the two he might more legally do, then the *Indies*; *for that the English have been subject to his power, the Indians never*.

(*A Description of the Island*, 1672)

5. Conclusion

In the second half of the 17th century, the circulation of propaganda pamphlets recounted stories which contributed to the mythistory of the English conquest and colonization of Jamaica (Robertson 2002a: 815). The aim was to encourage and maintain a continuing stream of British immigrants which was essential to the colony's life and defence after 1655. This required a skilful manipulation

of information through exaggeration of positively evaluated aspects and prospects, the suppression or sanitization of controversial issues related to the capture and retention of the island and the demonization of the Spanish colonists as do-ers of atrocities against the Indians. Since the success or failure of propaganda depended on the reader's willingness to accept the credibility of the source and the content of the pamphlet, authors endeavoured to place the message within a socio-cultural and historical framework which readers could adhere to. This was crucial to challenge and possibly defeat rumours about the unlawfulness and precariousness of the possession as well as narratives about the hardship and mortality on the island.

The results of the corpus-based analysis featured four most frequent keywords: *Island, Spaniards, Jamaica and Indians* which reveal how propaganda discourse interlaced the description of the territory with the ideologically biased representation of the two ethnic groups living in it. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of keywords and clusters in context show that authors rely on five major cultural constructs to persuade potential recruits to leave for Jamaica: 1) bountifulness of the island through a language of abundance (e.g. *exceeding great plenty, full of*) and biodiversity (*variety, other*) which recalls the rhetoric of early 17th-century pamphlets on Virginia (Ceconi 2020); 2) legality and safety guaranteed through a detailed reporting of laws for the protection of rights and property (e.g. *Judge or Judges of the Admiralty of this Island*); 3) health guaranteed by the beneficial effects of air and herbs on human body and pregnancy (e.g. *beneficial to their living, easy and speedy Cure*); 4) the reassuring representation of the Island as a steady possession of the British Empire enjoying the king's favour (e.g. *under the [kings/Majesties] Great/broad seal of this island*); 5) the divine legitimation of the English colonization through the dysphemistic representation of the Spanish as brutal killers of the Indians and the consequential framing of Protestant Englishmen as liberators (e.g. *destroyed, murdered, massacred, an infinite numbers of the Indians, many of the Indians*). To assess the extent to which these cultural constructs persuaded readers of the truthfulness of the information and eventually led some of them to migrate to Jamaica is not an easy task.⁹ What is possible to claim is that the conflation of informative

⁹ In the aftermath of the capture of Jamaica, the Florentine resident in London Amerigo Salvetti reported to the Grand Duke of Tuscany that English people did not fully believe in the optimistic accounts provided by the generals and published in the press, neither did they express any desire to settle in Jamaica, after seeing the terrible health conditions of those who had just come back from the island: "Contuttociò non pare che questo popolo dia intera credenza a questa sua [General Penn's] relazione, nè che mostri nessuna inclinazione ad andarvi ad abitare, vedendo per sperienza che

and emotional elements contributed to engaging reading which responded to people's growing interest in colonial expansion and the socio-economic opportunities that it could offer.

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Language ideology and national propaganda in 18th-century British dictionaries of arts and sciences

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the entry Language in three major British dictionaries of arts and sciences published between 1728 and 1778. The aim is to highlight the ideological gaze which contributed to the construction of the emerging nation-state as represented by language. In other words, the analysis is focussed on the discourse about and around the British national and linguistic identity as promoted in the *Cyclopaedia* (1728), the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-1771), and Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1778-1788). The investigation demonstrates how the ideological load is carried out over time by using similar linguistic expressions and rhetorical strategies s.v. Language, and how language is pivotal in establishing the British nation and the expanding British Empire.

Keywords: language ideology, national propaganda, 18-c. dictionaries of arts and sciences, 18th-century encyclopaedias, language and nation, language identity, British empire, the expansion of English.

1. Introduction

At the start of the Eighteenth century, a newly emerging genre helped change the representation, the conceptualisation, and the vernacularisation of the world: this turning point was marked by the publication of *universal dictionaries of arts and sciences*, also known as encyclopædias. These reference works, “as the products of a cosmopolitan Republic of Letters, a kingdom and a nation” (Yeo 2001: xviii),¹

¹ “The English dictionaries of arts and sciences can therefore be seen as a significant presence in the early-eighteenth century Republic of Letters. They assumed,

promoted the dissemination of traditional and contemporary knowledge, values and ideas in eighteenth-century British society and across Europe (cf. Yeo 1991, 1996, 2003; Neumann 2009; Abbott 2010). Language and sociolinguistic issues, along with the construction of cultural prestige and identity, represent major fields of interest.

The general aim of this paper is a close examination of the most relevant linguistic attitudes, ideologies and cultural assumptions as they emerge from the long and complex entry Language in British dictionaries of arts and sciences published between 1728 and 1788. These two dates represent, on the one hand, the starting point of the study with the publication of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728; hereafter *Cy*), a milestone in 18th-century British and European dictionaries of arts and sciences; on the other hand, the close of the century with the first edition of Abraham Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1778-1788; hereafter *RCy*). This latest work is the first in-depth revision, as expansion and updating, of Chambers's 1728 version. They delimit the time span under scrutiny here, sixty years that testify to the dynamic complexity in the elaboration of the linguistic and sociolinguistic thought across decades. For their similarities, *Cy* and *RCy* represent a continuum between the first and the second half of the century. However, *RCy*'s innovations also emphasise the adaptation of the role of language, and English in particular, to the new socio-historical and socio-political context of the emerging, expanding, and consolidating nation-state within and beyond the British Isles (cf. Sklar 1989: 373; Brewer 1989: 1270-1271):

There is a noticeable change in the emphasis between the dedication of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* in 1728 and that given in the edition by Rees in 1786 [...]. Whereas in both there was the suggestion that the

and facilitated, the cross-national communication of knowledge, a feature of the European magazines and journals. [...] they advertised their main content [...] as especially suitable for a 'universal' audience." (Yeo 2001: 57). However, contemporary ideology and national propaganda, as well as the expansion of the British Empire are overt and mark the construction of linguistic and national identity. For these specific aspects, and their detailed treatment and argumentation, cf. Newman (1987) and Brewer (1989) on the rise of English nationalism and its cultural issues; Sklar (1989) on the interdependence among linguistic adequacy, linguistic patriotism, imperial interests, and gender issues; Neumann (2009) on the rhetoric of national character, its forms and functions, and its gender-based issues; Abbott (2010) on the relevance of rhetorical education and eloquence for supporting nationalism and the British Empire; Sebastiani (2014) on the ideas of *nation*, *nationalism* and *national character* in the Enlightenment debate; Rodríguez-Álvarez (2018) on the construction of 'linguistic heritage' through the early histories of the English language, particularly those included in dictionaries and grammars.

flourishing state of the arts and sciences reflected the personality and cultivation of the king as a member of the Republic of Letters, in Rees' dedication there was a more specific national slant, making the 'genius of Britain' an actor in its own right. Rees explained that although he had recorded 'every kind of information which may do justice to the merit of those, of *every country*, who have distinguished themselves in the cause of Science', he had been especially careful to include 'those inventions and improvements, which do honour to *his own country*, and to the distinguished munificence of his Sovereign' [Dedication, 1786, vol. 1, i-ii]. This shift from cosmopolitan to national focus is also apparent in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which began with no dedication at all. (Yeo 2001: 239)

According to Del Lungo Camiciotti (1990a: 7), the decades between 1725 and 1775 are characterised by the elaboration of a linguistic model which encompasses and represents the ongoing civil, cultural, national, and intellectual transformations in the contemporary British context. This is also confirmed by Rodríguez-Álvarez (2018) in her analytical work on the early histories of the English language. She declares that "the prefatory matter of many dictionaries and grammars started to include brief historical sketches of the language" and that "though these sketches were mainly devised to extol the excellence of the language, they also gave historical legitimacy to the English language, and endowed the vernacular with an ancient lineage that could vie with those of the prestigious classical languages" (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2018: 100), especially from 1750 onwards.

Within this chronological and diachronic frame of reference, the second half of the century is mainly characterised by the publication in Edinburgh of another major dictionary of arts and sciences, "compiled upon a new plan": the first edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-1771, cf. title page; hereafter *EB*). This dictionary of arts and sciences is the first to include in its title the word *encyclopaedia* and, more relevant for the aim of the present study, to qualify it as British: *Britannica* is "a national allusion [...] part of the cultural strategy pursued by Lowland Scots in the decades after the Act of Union" (Yeo 2001: 177), one of those strategies used to construe and represent "a shared sense of Britishness which could be superimposed over an array of internal differences" (Neumann 2009: 280; cf. also Brewer 1989: 1271). This means to refer to (Great) Britain as a unique entity and, for this reason, to suggest shared institutional and socio-political issues (Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 12; 1990b: 105), beyond cultural ones, "[r]eflecting developments in

intellectual culture” which associated “the English language [...] with the rise of the sciences” (Percy 2010: 41). Language is seen “as a unifying factor [...] among the different regions of Britain [...] a ‘national language’” (Hickey 2010: 15), a ‘uniform’ variety which underpins the ideology of a standard in English. The need of one common national tongue “throughout Britain (and its colonies)” (Jones 2010: 226), of a “general, or national Language” (*Cy*, s.v. Dialect), or of English “as a growth industry” in education (Percy 2010: 42) become pivotal to national identity:

English-language advocates sought to promote English as a language worthy of national pride, one that could be perceived, moreover, as competitive within an international linguistic community that had long held it in contempt. [...] To understand the connection between language and national self-image, we must turn to a branch of linguistic theory [...] that might be described as a judgmental precursor of comparative linguistics (Sklar 1989: 373)

In this multifaceted perspective, the study will start from *EB* to trace back how language ideology and national propaganda are overtly constructed and disseminated in the entries Language with specific reference to the rhetoric of nationalism, nation’s prestige, and national progress (Abbott 2010: 123): it was “the responsibility of a good nation to refine its language [...] since the state of the language was regularly interpreted as a mirror of the state of the nation” (Mugglestone 2003: 24). The idea of “a single nation and a single form of language” is not only relevant, but central in the eighteenth-century “national language complex” (Hickey 2010: 11, 2012: 8) understood as, for example, public and disseminated use, as central is the need of codification (Beal 2010: 23), and standardisation (Jones 2010: 227). These aspects are extremely relevant in the process of selection, refinement, codification, and representation of English which characterise the second half of the century. The previous notions and processes will be at the core of the following discussion.

2. English “will yield the palm to none”

Towards the end of the entry Language in *EB*, the long and complex discourse on the origin of language and its main functions in any society focusses on English in particular and achieves its climax when the appraisal definitely unfolds in the words of the compiler. The sequence and the conciseness of

positive and hyperbolic expressions is directly connected with the strength and the effectiveness of its impact on the readership. In comparison with the classical languages and other more prestigious modern languages,

- (1) although, in mere pleasantness of sounds, or harmonious flow of syllables, our language [*English*] may be inferior to the Greek, the Latin, Italian, and Spanish; yet in point of manly dignity, graceful variety, intuitive distinctness, nervous energy of expression, unconstrained freedom of harmony of poetic numbers, it will yield the palm to none. (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 879)

This concluding section sums up the key points of a process which represents the English language as the cultural, historical, national paradigm, before being a linguistic one, and inseparable from it. It is worth highlighting here a recurrent and pivotal theme: the question of a “gender-based” attitude to language (Neumann 2009: 275-276). *Manly dignity* essentially represents middle-class (male) values, and is systematically associated with Britishness, against ‘aristocratic effeminacy’ (Neumann 2009: 288). In particular, according to Sklar,

during this period, the politics of gender [...] was deployed in the service of linguistic patriotism and the politics of imperial conquest. The notion of English as a masculine language [...] assumed special significance for eighteenth-century England, as a response to the related pressures of imperial aspiration and sociolinguistic anxiety. [...] to promote English as a language worthy of national pride [...]. Representing English as a ‘manly’ language was a key strategy in this undertaking. (Sklar 1989: 372-373)

The last forty years of the eighteenth century emphasise what had been going on for at least the two previous centuries: the need to identify a variety which would be adopted at a national level (cf. Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 9, 12-14; 1990b: 100, 103, 105; Hickey 2010: 10-11; Mugglestone 2003: 7-11, 24-25), a prestigious variety to be codified and to be used in any circumstance. Over the century, it is around this idea(l) that British universal dictionaries of arts and sciences receive and epitomise the debate on language and its multifaceted perspectives, including national propaganda.

If the quotation (1) taken from *EB* is here the starting point of the discussion, because it clearly outlines the ideological gaze on language and the people who use it in the second half of the century, it is worth going back

chronologically to the entry *Language* in *Cy* (1728), and the related notions and concepts involved in the discussion. Contents will also be compared for the same entry with those included in *RCy* (1778-1788), to highlight similarities (e.g. more traditional issues) and differences (e.g. updating, adaptations, additions and omissions). This method of approaching the primary sources and commenting on them would trace that conceptual continuum over time which characterises eighteenth-century linguistic and sociolinguistic thought, made of forward and backward shifting moves and apparently opposite coexisting forces in the historical and diachronic perspectives.

2.1 Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728) and Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1778-1788)

The entry *Language* in *Cy* and *RCy* is of medium length, three dense folio columns in small typeface. In both dictionaries the first sections overlap with tiny differences and, after a general definition, "a Set of Words which any People have agreed upon, in order [*RCy*: whereby] to communicate their Thoughts to each other" (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. *Language*), they introduce some of the major issues of the debate. The notions of usage and custom are said to be "the Rule of a Language", and the rules are just reflections of "a *Language* already introduced by Use" and represent "the Manners of speaking used in the *Language*" (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. *Language*). However, there are differences in usage, it may be bad or good, and this distinction is here said to be "derived from the Expressions used by the most eminent Persons among the People; [...] Quality and Authority [...] Learning and Reputation of writing well" (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. *Language*). From this point of view, it seems that the authors and literary works still play a major role in defining good usage, reflecting a seventeenth-century outlook on language, until about 1725 (Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 10-11). At the same time, innovative hints are introduced: not "the best Part", as suggested by Vaugelas, but "the *greatest* Part, [...] the most numerous Part being something fix'd and palpable", as stated by Buffier (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. *Language*).² If good usage is grounded on 'elite usage', this same usage should represent the greatest part of this elite, suggesting that language is perceived as and is becoming a social entity, and this approximately happened between 1725 and 1775 (Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 10-11). It is at this point that the discussion shifts from general

² For an in-depth reading on Buffier's (meta)linguistic approach and theoretical perspective, see Swiggers (1983).

language issues, moving between more traditional insights (e.g. the best Part of the Authors) and a more recent and contemporary outlook (e.g. usage, custom, rules as reflections, *greatest Part*), to the notion of genius “or Natural Complexion of each People and the *Language* they speak” (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. Language). The identification of language as the expression of precise characteristics of a given people is set forth, and opens to highly evaluative sections in which the other European languages and peoples are definitely made to overlap and match:

- (2) There is found a constant Resemblance between the Genius or Natural Complexion of each People and the *Language* they speak. Thus [...] the *Italians*, are sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, which is as visible in their *Language* as their Manners. The *Language* of the *Spaniards* is full of that Gravity and Haughtiness of Air which makes the distinguishing Character of the People. The *French*, who have a World of Vivacity, have a *Language* that runs extremely brisk and lively. And the *English*, who are naturally blunt, thoughtful, and of few Words, have a *Language* exceedingly short, concise, and sententious [*RCy*, “more concise and sententious, though far from being deficient in respect of copiousness”]. (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. Language)

This passage marks the first step in associating the English and their language with positive qualities, against the more stereotyped ones associated with the neighbouring countries which are introduced first in the sequence (cf. Sklar 1989: 373-374; Abbott 2010). This sequence also seems to represent the state of the art of the traditionally prestigious Latinate languages against the still uncertain role of English in the contemporary context. However, if English comes later, either on the European scene or the textual space, it clearly emerges for its ‘natural’ (i.e. positive, not ornamented/-al) qualities, intrinsic to the language (*exceedingly short, concise, sententious*, not deficient in *copiousness*), as well as to the people using it (*blunt, thoughtful, of few Words*; cf. Abbott 2010: 109). On the other hand, the other European (formerly) prestigious peoples – or countries – and languages are eventually marked by some sort of decline (*sunk, full of, runs extremely*), and by imbalance and redundancy (*softness and effeminacy*, cf. Sklar 1989: 375, 377; *gravity and haughtiness, world of vivacity/extremely brisk and lively*). According to Neumann (2009: 288), by “maximising the difference between the British self and the national others the rhetoric of national character throws into high relief the uniqueness of Britishness, thus making the British appear as a rather homogenous nation sharing a number of positive qualities” and, at the

same time, obfuscating internal socio-cultural and political differences and contradictions in order to shape “a collective consciousness, of imagining communities” (Sebastiani 2014: 604).

The previous passage definitely and subtly marks the introduction of genius, the English genius (cf. Abbott 2010: 109-110 on the ‘British genius’; Sklar 1989: 374 on linguistic anthropomorphism). The tight and steady correspondence between the genius of the people and their language becomes clear in the following passage, which is noticeably more marked, as well as the overlapping of language-tongue and people:

- (3) The *Spaniards* seem to place the Nobleness and Gravity of their *Language*, in the Number of Syllables, and the Swelling of Words; and speak less to make themselves understood, than to make themselves admired [...] their language cannot paint a Thought to the Life; it always magnifies it, frequently distorts it; and does nothing if it do not exceed Nature. The *Italian* Tongue does not swell up Things to that Degree, but it adorns and embellishes them more; yet these Ornaments and Embellishments are not real Beauties. The *Italian* Expressions, thus rich and brilliant, are like those Faces cover’d with Patch and Paint, which make a fine Show; but that Finery, all Deceit. The *French* Language [...] is simple without Lowness, bold without Indecency, elegant and florid without Affectation, harmonious without Swelling, majestic without Pride, delicate without Softness, and strong without Roughness. As to the Points of Strength and Majesty, the *French* must give Way to the *English*, which in these, as well as in Copiousness, exceeds most of the living *Languages*; as far as it comes behind some of them in Smoothness and Delicacy. (Cy, and RCy with minor typeface differences, s.v. Language)

English is introduced at the end of the paragraph and, in comparison with Spanish, Italian, and French, essentially displays fairly recent, positive, and functional qualities: the ‘old’ gives way to the ‘new’, and the ‘new’ only seems to require some refinement as “it comes behind some of them in Smoothness and Delicacy” (Cy, and RCy with minor differences, s.v. Language). If Spanish is characterised by *nobleness and gravity* (*number of syllables, swelling of words, magnifies and distorts*, etc.), Italian by *ornaments* (*it adorns and embellishes, finery [is] all deceit*), and French as a more balanced language (*bold vs. indecency, elegant vs. affectation, harmonious vs. swelling, majestic vs. pride, delicate vs. softness*) without excess, English is only apparently inferior, since it is not only the most copious but also

- (4) Of all the modern *Languages*, the *English* is allowed to be the closest and the most clear [*RCy*: most clear, and fit for philosophical and critical subjects; the chastest], the chastest and the most reserved in its Diction, the most judicious and severe in its Ornaments: Of all others it is the most honest, open and undesigning; it won't bear double-meanings, nor can it palliate or hide Nonsense: bad Sense and good *English* being Things inconsistent [it won't ... inconsistent: not included in *RCy*]. With all its Sublimity it is gay and pleasant on occasion; but its Gaiety is still moderated and restrained by good Sense; it hates excessive Ornaments, and for the greater Simplicity, would almost chuse to go naked: It never dresses more than Decorum and Necessity requires. (*Cy*, and *RCy* with minor typeface and textual differences, s.v. Language)

The ancient and more traditional prestige of the European languages gives way to the more recent communicative potential and effectiveness of the English language. A series of superlatives emphasises its qualities and describes it in absolute terms. Linguistic conciseness, precision and accuracy (*closest, hates excessive ornaments*), perspicuity and plainness (*most clear, greater simplicity*), and, not least, adequacy (*philosophical and critical subjects, only in RCy*) are the sublime qualities (*its Sublimity*) to express and discuss any content in any context. However, many of the qualities retrieved in the passage and attributed to English represent extra-linguistic values and principles, especially the socio-cultural and moral principles of eighteenth-century British polite society: “[t]he more civilized and intellectually sophisticated the culture, the more perfect its language. [...] the status of a nation was measured in part by the merits (or lack thereof) of its language; linguistic inadequacy inevitably betrayed an inferior culture [...] In its quest for empire, England required at the very least a ‘good’ language” (Sklar 1989: 373). The “merits” of English represent ‘sublime’ human qualities and attitudes: some of them are more general (*most judicious and severe, good sense, most honest, open and undesigning, decorum and necessity*), others are usually associated with the virtues of the female sex, especially middle and upper-middle urban society and well-off women in general (*chastest and the most reserved, gay and pleasant, gaiety ... moderated and restrained*). English does not need any embellishment since it already possesses the linguistic potential to express anything: “for the greater Simplicity, would almost chuse to go naked” (*Cy*, and *RCy*, s.v. Language). On the one hand, language descriptions and strictly linguistic observations are not included (cf. Rodríguez-Álvarez

2018: 118-119); on the other hand, the display of those values and attitudes that are the pillars of that particular country or, rather, nation-state, are at the core of the entry. Language is a socio-political institution (Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 12) whose socio-cultural and national propaganda culminates towards the end of Chambers's entry in highly metaphorical terms (cf. Appendix 1, column 3 hyperbole/climax; this section is omitted from *RCy*), which make the ideas that were introduced in the preceding paragraph (examples 3 and 4 above; Appendix 1, columns 1 and 2) more concrete though highly hyperbolic and biased. Table 1 below summarises the major qualities attributed to English and the other European languages (*Cy* and *RCy*). The scheme includes a three-stage pattern: 1-labelling (less marked attitude and evaluation), 2-expansion/crescendo (more qualities and details are added), 3-hyperbole/climax (highly marked and biased attitude). The full text is instead provided in Appendix 1, at the end of the study. The three stages reflect the approach used by the compilers: the opening paragraphs introduce the main characteristics – stereotypes, clichés – attached to peoples (the *Spaniards*, the *Italians*, the *French*, the *English*), and later on in the entry these features are converted into biased language issues. The scheme can be read from left to right (same language), or from top to bottom (comparison between languages):

Table 1. English and the other European Languages (*Cy* and *RCy*)

People and language	1-labelling	2-expansion/crescendo	3-hyperbole/climax
Spaniards	Gravity and Haughtiness of Air	–	–
Spanish	–	Gravity of their Language, Swelling of Words, language magnifies, distorts, exceed[s]	Rivers [...] always swelling, muddy, turbulent, overflowing, haughty Dame, excess and extravagancy
Italians	Softness and Effeminacy	–	–
Italian	–	adorns and embellishes, Ornaments and Embellishments, not real Beauties, Patch and Paint, Finery-Deceit	pleasing Rivulets, a Coquette, fine Airs, shewing her Finery, to be admired

French [people]	Vivacity, brisk and lively	–	–
French [language]	–	simple, bold, elegant and florid, harmonious, majestic, delicate, strong (vs. lowness, indecency, affectation, swelling, pride, softness, roughness)	beautiful Streams, briskly but smoothly and equally, easy Prude, Modesty, Discretion
English [people]	blunt, thoughtful, of few Words	–	–
English [language]	short, concise, sententious	Strength and Majesty, Copiousness, closest and most clear, chastest and the most reserved, most judicious and severe ... Ornaments, most honest, open, and undesigning, no double-meanings, Nonsense, bad Sense, Sublimity, gay and pleasant, moderated and restrained, greater Simplicity, Decorum, Necessity	the Nile, Majesty, Abundance, waters roll rapidly, Depth, never roars, nor overflows without enriching the Soil, Masculine Temperament, of a different Sex [from the others, represented as 'female sex'], Virtues of a Man, Faculties more extensive, Conduct more ingenuous, Views more noble

The descriptions devoted to Spanish, Italian and French are more concise than the more detailed and expanded section on English, but in all of them the same rhetorical strategy is applied: lexical repetition and repetition with variation of the same concepts, accumulation of negative qualities (ex. Spanish and Italian), contrast and balancing between positive vs. negative qualities (French), emphasis on highly positive qualities (English), reproduce the same or similar text and discourse patterns. Two metaphors are effectively used across languages, to make the comparison more easily understandable, that is to say running water and female behaviour vs. male virtues: "If virility characterizes a language at the height of its perfection, a language in decline degenerates into effeminacy" (Sklar 1989: 377). Spanish is represented by *swelling rivers-haughty dame* (excess) and Italian by *pleasing rivulets-coquette* (finery and deceit); French is a more balanced language, something like

beautiful streams-easy prude (i.e. modesty and discretion); whereas the English-Nile (*majesty* and *abundance*) is the ‘male river’, the language is characterised by its *masculine temperament* (*of a different sex, virtues of a man*) and opposed to “the three former, [...] the Daughters [of their common mother, Latin] have very different Genius’s and Inclinations” (*Cy*, s.v. Language; not in *RCy*).

After “Decorum and Necessity requires” (cf. example (4) above and Appendix 1, end of column 2, *Cy* and *RCy*), Rees omits Chambers’s long and highly biased metaphorical paragraph (Appendix 1, column 3), and updates the text with a concise section on *regularity* and *analogy*, two principles which become fundamental in the end-of-the-century debate on language (cf. Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 61; 1990b: 20). The passage, not included in *Cy*, reads as follows: “The English language is derived from so many and such different sources, that, on this account, it is deficient in regularity and analogy. Yet we have this advantage to compensate the defect that what we want in elegance, we gain in copiousness, in which last respect few *languages* will be found superior to our own” (*RCy*, s.v. Language; cf. Rodríguez-Álvarez 2018). The need for regularity, uniformity, and analogy as similarity of functions characterises the end-of-the-century interest in standardisation.³ Rees updates with pivotal contemporary metalinguistic debate the last paragraph of his entry, which comes to a close a few lines later without further relevant details.

2.2 Encyclopaedia Britannica (1768-1771)

As regards *EB*, the entry Language is a very long one, in comparison with the medium length of *EB* entries and *Cy-RCy* Language. It seems to be a long essay of thirty-four quarto columns (*EB*, s.v. Language, pp. 863-880), densely written in small typeface. The entry opens with a general definition of language as the privileged means by which humans communicate “the several sensations and ideas of one man [...] to another” (*EB*, s.v. Language,

³ The interconnected notions of regularity, uniformity, analogy, and the processes of codification and standardisation are extremely complex to be discussed in this study and would require a study on their own. For in-depth reading on these specific topics, it is worth mentioning the following studies, beyond those already cited in the body: Beal (2004), focussing on phonological and morpho-syntactic changes in Late Modern English, and the standardisation process; Curzan (2014) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2010) and (2020), discussing the standardisation process, the notion of prescriptivism, and the role of usage between past and present. As regards the present investigation, it only focusses on and analyses the relationship between language and national propaganda.

p. 863), and later on the entry discusses the artificial and social nature of language which derives from a “particular compact” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 863) among people, and is “different in different parts of the globe [...] from the different genius of every society [...] unintelligible to every other body of men, but those belonging to the same society where that language was originally invented” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 863). Not only does language, as a human and historical invention, undergo change, but it expands in “those nations which have improved their reasoning faculties, and made some progress in the polite arts” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 864; cf. also *RCy*, “fit for philosophical and critical subjects”, s.v. Language; cf. Sklar 1989: 373). The relationship between language, civilising progress, and nation is overtly recognised and emphasised as an essential feature, and the notion of genius as a remarkable difference – “Natural Complexion of each People and the *Language they speak*” (*Cy* and *RCy*, s.v. Language), “different sources” (*RCy*, s.v. Language) – is promoted in the opening paragraphs. The tight relationship nation ⇌ language ⇌ genius is here established:

- (5) It may be considered as a general rule, that the language of any nation is an exact index of the state of their [i.e. people] minds. [...] by the GENIUS of a language we mean to express *the particular set of ideas which the words of any language, either from their formation or multiplicity, are most naturally apt to excite in the mind of any one who hears it properly uttered*. Thus, although the *English, French, Italian, and Spanish* languages, nearly agree in the same general idiom [i.e. general mode of arranging words into sentences]; yet the particular genius of each is remarkably different: [...] *The English [...] the French [...] the Italian [...] the Spanish [...]*. (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 864; cf. Tables 2 and 3, and Appendices 2 and 3)

The first section of the long entry sets the scene (*EB*, s.v. Language, pp. 865-871), the end-of-the-century perspective on language/s and their historical background and heritage which mark their own particular distinction, or genius. The modern languages, such as English, or French, and “every language of Europe” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 865) can now rival “in *some respect*” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 865) with the admired classical ones. The status of the modern European languages has been changing over time to adapt them to the social values and needs of their users (cf. Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 47 and 61, 1990b: 21; Hickey 2010: 15). *EB* reflects this issue by expanding the notions of genius and differentiation already introduced:

- (6) all languages [...] are the means of conveying the ideas of one man to another; yet as there are an infinite variety of ways in which we might wish to convey these ideas, sometimes by the easy and familiar mode of conversation, and at other times by more solemn addresses to the understanding, by pompous declamation, &c. it may so happen, that the genius of one language may be more properly adapted to the one of these than the other, while another language may excel in the opposite particular. (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 871)

Later on, language is explicitly associated with the idea of usefulness (i.e. *beneficial, effectually*), society, and progress, which also are the essential values of *EB*:⁴

- (7) we must surely consider that language as the most beneficial to society, which most effectually removes these bars that obstruct its progress. (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 872)

The second section of the entry Language, focusses on each of the four main modern languages: Italian, Spanish, French, and English “with a few observations upon the particular nature and genius of those languages which are now chiefly studied or spoken in Europe” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 872). In this case, as in *Cy* and *RCy*, some qualities are attributed to these languages in relation to the people-users and the countries they represent, their past and present status. As it appears in *Cy* and *RCy*, some European languages are somewhat stigmatised in comparison with English, and the English people. The overlap between the genius of the people-users, their society, the emerging nation-state, and the genius of the language is overt (Neumann 2009: 288; Abbott 2010: 109-110). As in Table 1 above, Table 2 below summarises and highlights all these aspects for Italian, Spanish, and French, whereas English is represented and discussed in Table 3 (cf. also Appendices 2 and 3). The languages are chronologically arranged as they appear in the entry, and the information provided by the compilers is redistributed in the three columns (cf. also Appendix 2, for the full text). The descriptions, or representations, devoted to Italian, Spanish, and French are more concise than the long section assigned to the English language. Some

⁴ The very concise preface of *EB* (1768-17771) introduces the notion of utility (or usefulness) as a key principle and reads as follows: “UTILITY ought to be the principal intention of every publication. [...] To diffuse the knowledge of Science, is the professed design of the following work”. (*EB*, Preface, p. v).

of the features attributed to the three European languages reaffirm both the attitude and the lexical choices – or, lexical stereotypes and clichés – already found in *Cy* and *RCy*, but with a less involved tone and emphatic bias:

Table 2. The European Languages – *EB*

People and language	1-labelling	2-expansion/crescendo	3-hyperbole/climax
Italian [people]		inhabitants of Italy = sunk and enervated, luxury, depression of mind, anarchy, effeminate	
Italian [language]	soothing and harmonious	debility, softened and enfeebled, flowing and harmonious but destitute of [...] nerves [i.e. strength and vigour]	excelling in fewer branches of literature, tender tone of elegy
Spanish [people]		military prowess and dignity of mind	
Spanish [language]	grave, sonorous, stately	sonorous and solemn, dignity as the Latin	elegant and courteous for conversation; torpid inactivity in advancing knowledge/improving language
French [people]			sprightly genius-surmount difficulties, gay and loquacious-invented an infinity of words, words/vague and unmeaning compliment-politeness, attention of the fair sex
French [language]	weaker and more flowing	poorest languages of Europe, words run into one another/ indistinctness, incapable of measure and harmony	most generally esteemed, most universally spoken, use of French-never be at a loss

In Table 2, as in *Cy* and *RCy*, Italian is still associated with softness and effeminacy (e.g. *softened*, *effeminate people*), Spanish with gravity, magnificence and solemnity (e.g. *grave*, *stately*, *solemn*, etc.), and French with more balanced

qualities whose weaknesses are compensated by its strengths, such as, for example, *indistinctness* of vowels and/or words vs. *vivacity* and *sprightly genius, excess* and *superficial accomplishments-infinity of words* vs. ‘*dignified politeness*’, a language so widely *esteemed* and *spoken* in Europe (e.g. *one who uses the French can never be at a loss*).

As regards the English language (cf. Table 3 and Appendix 3), the long section opens by emphasising the straightforward continuum between English and Great Britain (cf. Sklar 1989: 375-376), to conclude with the “majestic gracefulness” of this language at the end of the entry (cf. Sklar 1989: 376). In this section, English gradually becomes the language of overt national propaganda and the expressions used to highlight this function clearly emerge from the three-stage approach used in the entry and summarised below:

Table 3. English and Great Britain, the Nation and the Empire – *EB*

People and language	1-labelling	2-expansion/crescendo	3-hyperbole/climax
English [people]		bold, daring, impetuous, strong passions, absolute freedom and independence, great emotions, intrepid mind, no nation of Europe do the lower class of people speak their language with so much accuracy, mind [...] enlightened by knowledge	– admired and revered by all the world
English [language]	naturally bold, nervous, strongly articulated	greatest degree of excellence + number of defects vs. other languages, strongest [...] distinction from the genius of the people, [it is] bold, daring, abrupt, free from the contagion, primitive simplicity	– more peculiarly circumstanced, language of great and powerful nation-fleets surround the globe vs. less known; – more perfect treatises on every art and science vs. other language[s]; – superior powers for every purpose, models of perfections vs. neglected, despised, vilified by the people who use it;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – trodden under foot, many wounds vs. holds up its head, comeliness and vigour-its distinction; – healthy oak, rich and fertile soil, sprung up with vigour, vigorous/additional vigour/flourish, amazing magnitude and perfection, majestic gracefulness [How would the astonished world behold, with reverential awe, the majestic gracefulness of that object which they so lately despised!]
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In Table 3, the stunning characteristics attributed to the English language and people are strictly interwoven, and the text highly cohesive. The people are *bold*, *daring*, and *impetuous*, as well as passionate, free, and independent (*passions, freedom, independence*), and their language can only mirror and assume their *genius*, qualities and values (*bold, daring, abrupt*), and display its “primitive simplicity”, its original *free-from-the-contagion* essence. This is the reason why even the illiterate, “the lower class of people”, would speak it with *accuracy* (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 877-878). The essence of the English language is a mark of *excellence, vigour*, and *superior powers*, a mark of distinction corroborated by the many works and treatises (*models of perfection, in almost every particular; EB*, s.v. Language, p. 879) produced over time. The pairs people-genius, language-knowledge, language-nation represent the main semantic fields that overlap and unfold the same or similar concepts and lexical sets (word repetition and repetition with variation). English not only highlights and epitomises the ‘essence’ of the emerging and consolidating nation-state and its overt propaganda, but also the expansion of the empire in the expression “a great and powerful nation, whose fleets surround the globe” (*EB*, s.v. Language, p. 879), that is to say the British Isles and the British dominions around the world. In a few decades, and not only s.v. Language, *EB* “came to be regarded as an emblem of the British Empire: in the early nineteenth-century it was spoken of as the ‘national Encyclopaedia’ and seen as a carrier of British values to the colonies” (Yeo 2001: 1) since it embodied and supported a promotional and resolute national propaganda campaign.

3. Final remarks

This study examined the connection between the English language and eighteenth-century national propaganda s.v. Language in three major dictionaries of arts and sciences: Chamber's *Cyclopaedia* (1728), *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-1771), and Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1778-1788). The investigation was focussed on sixty years during which the metalinguistic and linguistic debate deeply changed the role and function of English: the need to identify, select, and codify a prestigious variety able to express the identity of an emerging nation-state and its expanding British Empire became pivotal. In other words, especially between 1725 and 1775 a variety able to express the ongoing civil, cultural, national, and intellectual transformation in the contemporary British society was established (cf. Del Lungo Camiciotti 1990a: 7).

British dictionaries of arts and sciences and the three entries Language examined refer to English as an emerging social entity (Del Lungo Camiciotti (1990a: 10-11) and national paradigm: the debate on and around the English language laid the background for the ideological rhetoric of nationalism or "the mirror of the state of the nation" (Mugglestone 2003: 24). The notion of genius is central in the discussion carried on s.v. Language: it expresses the *natural complexion* (cf. ex. 2) of each people and the language they use (cf. Abbott 2010). The traditional European languages, once prestigious and admired ones, are stigmatised and are constantly associated with negative qualities and decline, particularly Italian and Spanish. Italian displays *softness, effeminacy, embellishments and ornaments, finery and deceit* (see Table 1, Appendix 1); Spanish is haughty and grave, and with its emphasis *magnifies and distorts* reality (cf. Table 1, Appendix 1); the French language is more balanced, and still admired, but it always runs *briskly* (cf. Table 1, Appendix 1). Only English has those qualities which reflect the highly positive values of British contemporary civil society, and is characterised by *strength and majesty, copiousness, simplicity, decorum, necessity, and the virtues of a man*. Only English can definitely embody the emerging prestige of the gentlemanlike nation-state (cf. Sklar 1989; Neumann 2009).

The entry Language in *EB* becomes a long essay. The first half of it focusses on the general linguistic features of the most known European languages, the second half is completely devoted to the role and function of each of them. The section devoted to the European languages other than English is concise, and the stereotypical features of Italian, Spanish, and French trace back to what was already included in *Cy*, and later on partially repeated in *RCy*. Italian is *softened and enfeebled*, Spanish is *sonorous and solemn*, in French *words run into one another*, but is still "more generally

esteemed" (cf. Table 2, Appendix 2). In the contemporary world which expands beyond Europe and the British Isles, English is the only language to have achieved the "greatest degree of excellence" (cf. Table 3, Appendix 3). The genius of English (*bold, daring, abrupt, nervous, free, strongly articulated, passionate and simple*; cf. Table 3, Appendix 3) perfectly overlaps with the genius of its people. Moreover, language, genius, and the nation are still and inextricably interwoven, but the nation-state is now represented by a "more peculiarly circumstanced language" which also displays its *powers and superiority for every purpose*, in "more perfect treatises on every art and science" (cf. Table 3, Appendix 3). The nation-state is not only powerfully represented by its geographical expansion, but by the role that English assumes in producing and disseminating knowledge, understood as heritage and new contemporary knowledges, scientific progress, and technological discoveries (arts and sciences, cf. Table 3, Appendix 3).

In conclusion, the period under scrutiny highlights the pivotal function which the English language assumes in defining and institutionalising the nation-state, and the expansion of the British Empire. The rhetoric of national and linguistic identity, and the promotion of English by associating social values (e.g. *decorum, good sense, honest, undesigning*, etc., cf. Table 1, 3, Appendix 1, 3) with language features (e.g. *copiousness, simplicity, accuracy*, etc., cf. Table 1, 3, Appendix 1, 3) is clearly documented in the national propaganda discourse emerging from eighteenth-century dictionaries of arts and sciences.

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APPENDICES

Appendices 1, 2, 3 below summarise and schematise the three stages in which the four major European languages are defined and described, from labelling (less marked) to hyperbole/climax (highly marked). Appendices 1, 2, 3 can be read from top to bottom (comparison between languages), or from left to right (observations on the same language). The extracts do not reproduce the same order in which they are found in the original entries, whereas the three stages reflect the approach used by the compilers.

APPENDIX 1

English and the other European languages –
Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* and Rees's *Cyclopaedia*

Starting point: s.v. Language	There is found a constant Resemblance between the Genius or Natural Complexion of each People and the <i>Language</i> they speak [...] (Cy and RCy)		
Stages:	1 (first) labelling (Cy and RCy)	2 expansion/crescendo (Cy and RCy, with minor differences)	3 hyperbole/climax (not included/ completely omitted in RCy)
Spanish the Spaniards	The <i>Language</i> of the <i>Spaniards</i> is full of that Gravity and Haughtiness of Air which makes	The <i>Spaniards</i> seem to place the Nobleness and Gravity of their Language,	The <i>Spanish</i> resembles those Rivers whose Waters are always swelling, and always muddy

	Character of the People.	in the Number of the distinguishing Syllables, and the Swelling of Words; and speak less to make themselves understood, than to make themselves admired [...] their language cannot paint a Thought to the Life; it always magnifies it, frequently distorts it; and does nothing if it do not exceed Nature.	and turbulent; that never keep long within the Channel, but are ever overflowing, and their Overflowings ever noisy and precipitate. The <i>Italian</i> [...] The <i>Spanish</i> , a hughty Dame, that piques herself on her Quality, and loves Excess and Extravagancy in every thing. The <i>Italian</i> [...]
Italian the Italians	[...] the <i>Italians</i> , are sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, which is as visible in their <i>Language</i> as their Manners.	The <i>Italian</i> Tongue does not swell up Things to that Degree [as the <i>Spaniards</i>], but it adorns and embellishes them more; yet these Ornaments and Embellishments are not real Beauties. The <i>Italian</i> Expressions, thus rich and brilliant, are like those Faces cover'd with Patch and Paint, which make a fine Show; but that Finery, all Deceit.	The <i>Italian</i> is like those pleasing Rivulets that purl agreeably among the Stones, and glide in Meanders through Meadows full of Flowers. The <i>French</i> [...] The <i>Italian</i> a Coquette, full of fine Airs; always appearing dress'd, and taking all Occasions of shewing her Finery: to be admired, being all she aims at. The <i>French</i> , [...]
French the French	The <i>French</i> , who have a World of Vivacity, have a <i>Language</i> that runs extremely brisk and lively.	The <i>French Language</i> [...] is simple without Lowness, bold without Indecency, elegant and florid without	The <i>French</i> resembles one of those beautiful Streams that always run briskly, but at the same time smoothly

		<p>Affectation, harmonious without Swelling, majestic without Pride, delicate without Softness, and strong without Roughness. [more balanced description in comparison with Spanish and Italian]</p>	<p>and equally; without much Noise or much Depth. The <i>English</i> [...] The <i>French</i>, an easy Prude, that has her Share of Modesty and Discretion, but on occasion can lay them both aside. The <i>English</i> [...]</p>
<p>English the English</p>	<p>And the <i>English</i>, who are naturally blunt, thoughtful, and of few Words, have a <i>Language</i> exceedingly short, concise, and sententious.</p>	<p>As to the Points of Strength and Majesty, the <i>French</i> must give Way to the <i>English</i>, which in these, as well as in Copiousness, exceeds most of the living <i>Languages</i>; as far as it comes behind some of them in Smoothness and Delicacy. Of all the modern <i>Languages</i>, the <i>English</i> is allowed to be the closest and the most clear [RCy: most clear, and fit for philosophical and critical subjects; the chastest], the chastest and the most reserved in its Diction, the most judicious and severe in its Ornaments: Of all others it is the most honest, open and undesigning; it won't bear double-meanings, nor can it palliate or hide</p>	<p>The <i>English</i> like the Nile, preserves a Majesty even in its Abundance; its Waters roll rapidly, notwithstanding their Depth; it never roars but when its Banks are so narrow, nor overflows without enriching the Soil. The <i>Latin</i> is the common Mother of the three former, but the Daughters have very different Genius's and Inclinations. The <i>Spanish</i> [...] The <i>Italian</i> [...] The <i>French</i> [...] The <i>English</i> is of a more Masculine Temperament. 'Tis not only of a different Family from the others, but appears of a different Sex too: Its Virtues are those of a Man; indeed 'tis the Product of</p>

		<p>Nonsense: bad Sense and good <i>English</i> being Things inconsistent [it won't ... inconsistent; not included in <i>RCy</i>]. With all its Sublimity it is gay and pleasant on occasion; but its Gaiety is still moderated and restrained by good Sense; it hates excessive Ornaments, and for the greater Simplicity, would almost chuse to go naked: It never dresses more than Decorum and Necessity requires.</p>	<p>a colder Climate and rougher People, and its Features may be somewhat coarser than those of its Neighbours; but its Faculties are more extensive, its Conduct more ingenuous, and its Views more noble. [this section is omitted from <i>RCy</i>]</p>
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APPENDIX 2

The European Languages – *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

<p>Starting point: s.v. Language p. 864</p>	<p>It may be considered as a general rule, that the language of any nation is an exact index of the state of their minds [i.e. people]. [...] by the GENIUS of a language we mean to express <i>the particular set of ideas which the words of any language, either from their formation or multiplicity, are most naturally apt to excite in the mind of any one who hears it properly uttered.</i> Thus, although the <i>English, French, Italian, and Spanish</i> languages, nearly agree in the same general idiom [i.e. general mode of arranging words into sentences]; yet the particular genius of each is remarkably different: [...] (cf. below, 1 labelling) <i>The English</i> [...] <i>the French</i> [...] <i>the Italian</i> [...] <i>the Spanish</i> [...].</p>		
<p>Stages:</p>	<p>1 (first) labelling</p>	<p>2 expansion/crescendo</p>	<p>3 hyperbole/climax</p>
<p>Italian the Italian</p>	<p>the <i>Italian</i> more soothing and harmonious (p. 864)</p>	<p>[...] as the natural inhabitants of Italy, before the last invasion of the</p>	<p>Hence, it happens that this language is fitted for excelling in fewer branches</p>

		<p>barbarians, were sunk and enervated by luxury and that depression of mind and genius which anarchy always produces [...] their language partook of the same debility as their body. [...] a language [...] softened and enfeebled by every device which an effeminate people could invent. [...] Thus the Italian language is formed flowing and harmonious, but destitute of those nerves which constitute the strength and vigour of a language. [...]. (p. 875)</p>	<p>of literature than almost any other [...]. (p. 875)</p> <p>The only species of poetry in which the Italian language can claim a superior excellence, is the tender tone of elegy [...]. (p. 876)</p>
<p>Spanish the Spaniards</p>	<p>the <i>Spanish</i> more grave, sonorous and stately (p. 864)</p>	<p>as the Spaniards have been always remarkable for their military prowess and dignity of mind, their language is naturally adapted to express ideas of that kind. Sonorous and solemn, it admits nearly of as much dignity as the Latin. (p. 876)</p>	<p>For conversation it is the most elegant and courteous language in Europe. [...] all the polite arts have been neglected: so that, while other European nation [sic] have been advancing in knowledge, and improving their language, they have remained in a state of torpid inactivity [...]. (p. 876)</p>

<p>French the French</p>	<p>the <i>French</i> is weaker, and more flowing (p. 864)</p>	<p>it will perhaps, by some, be thought an unpardonable insult, if we do not allow the French the preference of all modern languages in many respects. [...] to be obliged to rank it among the poorest languages of Europe [...] for in that language the vowels are so much curtailed in the pronunciation, and the words run into one another in such a manner, as of necessity to produce an indistinctness which renders it incapable of measure or harmony. (p. 876)</p>	<p>[...] although it can neither equal the dignity or genuine politeness of the Spanish, the nervous boldness of the English, nor the melting softness of the Italian; – although it is destitute of poetic harmony, and so much cramped in sound as to be absolutely unfit for almost every species of musical composition; – yet the sprightly genius of that volatile people has been able to surmount all these difficulties, and render it the language most generally esteemed, and most universally spoken, of any in Europe: for these people, naturally gay and loquacious, and fond of excess of those superficial accomplishments which engage the attention of the fair sex, have invented such an infinity of words capable of expressing vague and unmeaning compliment, now</p>
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		<p>dignified by the name of <i>politeness</i>, that, in this strain, one who uses the French can never be at a loss (p. 877)</p>
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APPENDIX 3

English and Great Britain, the Nation and the Empire – *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

<p>Starting point: s.v. Language p. 864</p>	<p>It may be considered as a general rule, that the language of any nation is an exact index of the state of their minds [i.e. people]. [...] by the GENIUS of a language we mean to express <i>the particular set of ideas which the words of any language, either from their formation or multiplicity, are most naturally apt to excite in the mind of any one who hears it properly uttered</i>. Thus, although the <i>English, French, Italian, and Spanish</i> languages, nearly agree in the same general idiom [i.e. general mode of arranging words into sentences]; yet the particular genius of each is remarkably different: [...] (cf. below, 1 labelling) <i>The English</i> [...] <i>the French</i> [...] <i>the Italian</i> [...] <i>the Spanish</i> [...].</p>		
Stages:	1 (first) labelling	2 expansion/crescendo	3 hyperbole/climax
English the English	<p>The <i>English</i> is naturally bold nervous, and strongly articulated (p. 864)</p>	<p>The English is perhaps possessed of a greater degree of excellence, blended with a greater number of defects, than any of the languages that we have hitherto mentioned. As the people of Great Britain are a bold, daring, and impetuous race of men; subject to strong passions, and, from the absolute</p>	<p>Such are the principal outlines of the language of Great Britain, such are its beauties, and such its most capital defects; a language more peculiarly circumstanced than any that has ever yet appeared. It is the language of a great and powerful nation, whose fleets surround the globe, and whose merchants are in</p>

freedom and independence which reigns among all ranks of people throughout this happy isle, little solicitous about controuling these passions; our language takes its strongest characteristic distinction from the genius of the people; and being bold, daring, and abrupt, is admirably well adapted to express those great emotions which spring up in an intrepid mind at the prospect of interesting events. (p. 877)

[...] we have preserved ourselves free from the contagion, and still retain the primitive simplicity of our language [...] we may boast, that in no nation of Europe do the lower class of people speak their language with so much accuracy, or have their mind so much enlightened by knowledge, as those of great Britain. (p. 878)

every port; a people admired, or revered by all the world; and yet it is less known in every foreign country, than any other language in Europe. In it are written more perfect treatises on every art and science, than are to be found in any other language; yet it is less sought after or esteemed by the literati in any part of the globe, than almost any of these. Its superior powers for every purpose of language are sufficiently obvious from the models of perfection, in almost every particular, which can be produced in it; yet it is neglected, despised, and vilified by the people who use it [...]. Neglected and despised, it has been trodden under foot as a thing altogether unworthy of cultivation or attention. Yet in spite of all these inconveniencies, in spite of the many wounds it has thus received, it still holds up its head,

and preserves
evident marks of
that comeliness and
vigour which are
its characteristic
distinction. Like
a healthy oak planted
in a rich and fertile
soil, it has sprung
up with vigour [...].
Should this plant, so
sound and vigorous,
be now cleared from
those weeds [...] who
can tell with what
additional vigour
it would flourish,
or what amazing
magnitude and
perfection it might
at last attain! How
would the astonished
world behold,
with reverential
awe, the majestic
gracefulness of that
object which they
so lately despised!
(pp. 879-880)

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Elocution, editorials, and Englishness: The role of print media in shaping accent attitudes in the long nineteenth century

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the historical policing of pronunciation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, with particular attention to regional variation and its entanglement with class, authority, and linguistic legitimacy. It begins by contextualizing how regional accents were socially charged, often eliciting responses of ridicule or exclusion. The analysis then turns to early prescriptive works by orthoepists such as Thomas Sheridan (1762 and 1780), William Kenrick (1783), and John Walker (1791), who helped construct a linguistic hierarchy in which ‘proper’ pronunciation was aligned with moral and social superiority. Building on these foundations, nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals extended prescriptive ideologies to a wider public, naturalising linguistic norms through humour, commentary, and complaint. Drawing on a corpus of editorials, advertisements, and letters to the editor from sources including *The Times*, *The Morning Chronicle*, and others, the article highlights how the press functioned as both a conduit and creator of metadiscourses on speech. These texts reveal that standard language ideologies were not solely imposed from above, but were also taken up, reproduced, and contested by the reading public. In examining how pronunciation became a symbolic site for the performance of class identity and cultural legitimacy, the article underscores the long-standing role of accent in structuring social inclusion and exclusion.

Keywords: Standard language ideology, pronunciation and social class, print media and language norms, regional accents and exclusion, elocution and linguistic authority, nineteenth-century British press.

1. Standard language debate: Social hierarchy and linguistic prestige

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, regional accents and dialects were not simply markers of geography; they also functioned as powerful indicators of class, education, and social legitimacy. Across a range of texts

from newspapers and periodicals, we will see how the ‘provincial’ speaker was treated with suspicion, amusement, or condescension. Whether in humorous anecdotes, or job advertisements, regional speech was consistently used to position speakers as outsiders to polite society. These portrayals offer insight into the linguistic prejudices of the time and the social boundaries enforced through language.

This article builds on my earlier research (Sturiale 2018), in which I examined how newspapers participated in constructing language ideologies in the nineteenth century. While some materials and conclusions from that earlier study are revisited here, the present article significantly extends the analysis both in chronological range and interpretive depth. It offers a more comprehensive account of the press’s role in circulating, contesting, and stabilising standard language ideologies, drawing on a broader and more systematically curated corpus. This expanded scope makes it possible to explore both continuities and shifts in accent attitudes over the long nineteenth century, and to respond more directly to the need, identified by scholars such as Görlach (1999), for historically grounded data on lay attitudes toward linguistic correctness and prestige.

In eighteenth-century Britain, the emergence of a standardised English pronunciation – often associated with the educated elite of London – led to the marginalization of regional speech patterns (Beal 2010, 2014).

Phrases like “provincial pronunciation” and “vulgar pronunciation” were frequently used in a derogatory manner to describe accents and dialects that deviated from this emerging norm, often associated with the educated elite of London. Orthoepists such as Thomas Sheridan, in his *Lectures on Elocution* (1762) and his dictionary (1781), and John Walker, in his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791), emphasized the importance of ‘correct’ pronunciation, associating it with social refinement and educational attainment. For example, in his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791), John Walker labelled certain pronunciations as “vulgar”, reflecting a broader societal tendency to associate non-standard speech with lower social status. These critical terms – such as “vulgar” (94 occurrences), “corrupt” (90), “improper” (54), and “gross” (33) – reveal a strong prescriptive stance toward language use. As visualised in Trapateau’s (2016: 27) analysis, Walker’s most frequent evaluative terms overwhelmingly emphasise deviation from a perceived norm rather than merely describing regional variation. Importantly, such descriptors were not limited to rural or regional accents but extended to any speech forms that did not align with the prescribed “polite” (43 occurrences) or “correct” (77 occurrences) standard, suggesting that linguistic judgment was intricately tied to social and moral hierarchies of the period.

Thomas Sheridan, for example, in his works, often contrasted the “refined” speech of the capital with the “corrupt” pronunciations found in the provinces, suggesting that provincial speech lacked the elegance and propriety of the standard form (Beal 2010).

These attitudes contributed to a linguistic hierarchy that marginalised regional dialects and accents, branding them as inferior or uneducated. The push for a standardised pronunciation was not merely about linguistic uniformity but also about reinforcing social stratifications and cultural dominance (Mugglestone 2003; Beal 2012).

The educated elite in London were not merely speaking differently; they were, through their accent, performing legitimacy, taste, and authority. Meanwhile, speakers from northern England, Scotland, or rural areas were subtly but firmly excluded from the imagined linguistic community of the ‘polite’. By stigmatising regional accents as corrupted or careless, eighteenth-century standardisation efforts reinforced a rigid social hierarchy in which speech functioned as both symptom and symbol of one’s place within the social order. Thus, pronunciation became a site where the anxieties of a rapidly changing class structure were encoded, negotiated, and enforced.

2. From the dictionary to the newspaper: Corpus, method, and historical frame

The present study draws on a qualitative corpus of digitised British newspapers spanning the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. The primary sources were retrieved from the *19th Century British Library Newspapers*, *The Times Digital Archive (1785-2019)*, and *Newspapers.com*. Search terms included “pronunciation”, “vulgar pronunciation”, “provincial pronunciation”, “accent”, “provincial accent”, and “standard English”, among others. These were selected to capture explicit metalinguistic commentary and public discourse surrounding accent, propriety, and social identity.

The resulting dataset includes over 250 newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and advertisements. From this broader collection, I selected approximately 40 texts for close qualitative analysis using two primary criteria: (1) the presence of overt evaluative language about pronunciation or accent (e.g. “vulgar”, “refined”, “correct”); and (2) the extent to which the text reflected or reproduced broader ideological stances concerning class, education, or national belonging through phonetic judgments. This

sampling was guided by an inductive, interpretive approach informed by discourse-historical and metapragmatic frameworks (cf. Agha 2007; Paulsen 2022a, 2022b). The aim was not statistical representativeness, but what might be termed ‘ideological density’ – the selection of texts that foreground accent as a site of normative struggle or symbolic conflict.

This study shares certain methodological affinities with Paulsen’s (2022a, 2022b) work on the enregisterment of American English in nineteenth-century U.S. newspapers, particularly in its attention to newspapers as key vehicles of metadiscursive activity. However, whereas Paulsen focuses on processes of enregisterment over time in a relatively well-defined discursive formation (i.e. “American English”), my approach foregrounds the ideological work of the British press in shaping social meanings attached to pronunciation across a longer and more thematically varied period. Rather than tracing the emergence of a single variety, I analyse how diverse phonetic features – especially those perceived as ‘provincial’ – were publicly evaluated, policed, and contested as part of broader struggles over class, education, and legitimacy. This more fragmented and socially textured approach aims to highlight the multiplicity of accent ideologies circulating in Britain across the long nineteenth century.

What had started as a debate between orthoepists and elocutionists, by the end of the eighteenth century had gone outside the scholarly confines and started to mark ‘a social discourse’ which justified and asked for prescriptive rules. It seems that eighteenth and nineteenth-century newspapers offered the discourse community of orthoepists the opportunity, in Richard Watt’s words (1999: 43), “to become ‘visible’ through the course of time” and, as a consequence, the community of readers could become “conscious of sharing their discourse practices”. As I have discussed elsewhere (Sturiale 2014), key terms associated with the standard language debate – such as “provincial pronunciation”, “vulgar pronunciation”, and “vicious pronunciation” – not only took on new connotative meanings, but also played a role in reinforcing a broader social divide. This divide reflected the aspirations of the emerging middle class, who – importantly – comprised the primary audience and consumer base for pronouncing dictionaries and usage manuals. This dynamic – where linguistic prescription reinforced social hierarchies – was not confined to abstract theory. It was often expressed in strikingly blunt terms by key figures involved in the standardisation process. A revealing example appears in Kenrick’s *A New Dictionary of the English Language* (1783), where he dismisses with scorn the idea that speakers from the linguistic peripheries might shape or teach standards of ‘proper’ English. He writes:

- (1) There seems indeed a most ridiculous absurdity in the pretensions of a native of Aberdeen or Tipperary, to teach the natives of London to speak and to read. Various have been nevertheless the modest attempts of the Scots and Irish, to establish a standard of English pronunciation. That they should not have succeeded is no wonder. Men cannot teach others what they do not themselves know (Kenrick 1783: i).

This passage vividly illustrates how linguistic ideology was bound up with assumptions of geographic and cultural superiority. For Kenrick, linguistic legitimacy is not a matter of education or rhetorical skill but of social origin, and more specifically, of proximity to London. The claim that speakers from Aberdeen or Tipperary are inherently unfit to instruct Londoners betrays a belief that ‘correct’ English is not merely learned, but possessed by birthright. In Kenrick’s formulation, language instruction becomes a function of social authority rather than linguistic competence, and elocution is transformed into a mechanism for exclusion. His remarks encapsulate a wider cultural tendency of the period: to equate standard English with social prestige and to delegitimise regional varieties as inherently flawed or comical deviations. And in this view, Kenrick was by no means alone. The impulse to tie linguistic authority to geographic and social identity is echoed in Samuel Johnson’s famously dismissive remark about Thomas Sheridan: “What entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? He has in the first place the disadvantage of being an Irishman” (Boswell 1934: ii, 161). Here, Johnson reduces Sheridan’s credibility as an orthoepist not on the basis of his scholarship or pedagogical skill, but purely on his national origin. Much like Kenrick, Johnson implies that being born outside England – and more pointedly, outside of London – constitutes an inherent linguistic deficiency. This comment underscores the extent to which the project of standardising English pronunciation was entangled with cultural prejudice and assumptions of English (specifically metropolitan) superiority. Sheridan, despite his contributions to elocution and rhetorical training, is symbolically disqualified by Johnson not because of what he says, but because of *who* he is. This reinforces the idea that the construction of a linguistic standard was as much about policing identity as it was about defining correct usage.

To illustrate the extent to which scholarly prejudices had entered public discourse, two striking letters to the editor underscore the mockery directed at non-English orthoepists and the persistence of ethnolinguistic hierarchies in the public imagination. A particularly scathing piece from the

Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser (14 December 1786) derides Irish involvement in pronunciation reform by comparing it to pigs performing rational acts:

- (2) [...] in an age like this, when attempts of a much more arduous nature are every day presented to our notice: when pigs are brought to exercise all the functions of rationality; and Hibernians profess to teach the true pronunciation of the English tongue. (*Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, London, 14 December 1786)

The analogy is not merely dismissive; it is profoundly dehumanising, as it suggests that Irish speaker's contributions to English phonology are both absurd and illegitimate. More than fifty years later, a letter to the editor published in *The Age* (22 August 1841) echoes this logic through a similarly sardonic observation:

- (3) English Pronouncing Dictionary. It is a curious fact that there is no English Pronouncing Dictionary compiled by an English-man. Stephen Jones was a Welshman, Sheridan was an Irishman, and Walker was a Scotchman [sic.]. (*The Age*, London 22 August 1841)

Here again, national origin is treated not as incidental but as disqualifying. These excerpts demonstrate how deeply embedded linguistic nationalism had become by the early nineteenth century. They also reveal that even as Irish, Scottish, and Welsh orthoepists were instrumental in shaping the very standards of English pronunciation, they continued to be framed as outsiders to the language they helped codify.

3. The power of the press in nineteenth-century language ideology

By the nineteenth century, newspapers and periodicals had become central agents in shaping public opinion, influencing not only political and cultural matters but also linguistic ones. As scholars like Mugglestone (2003) and Agha (2003) have observed, the press played a pivotal role in circulating and reinforcing standard language ideology, helping to define what was considered "correct" or "proper" English. This influence extended beyond grammar and vocabulary to include pronunciation, making the way English sounded an integral part of the broader ideological project.

Importantly, these publications did not merely reflect linguistic norms; they played an active role in constructing them. Through editorials, advice columns, letters to the editor, and satirical commentary, the press contributed to the development of a metalanguage surrounding accent and correctness, establishing frameworks for discussing and evaluating speech. These frameworks became accessible to an increasingly literate public, enabling readers to internalise, reproduce, and enforce linguistic norms. Moreover, newspapers were instrumental in propagating simplified and ideologically charged beliefs about language. These beliefs often reflected social hierarchies rather than linguistic realities (see Sturiale 2016, 2018).

In connection with this, Agha (2007) argues that the press expanded the circulation of accent metadiscourses into new domains, especially among middle-class readers. These publications not only reached wide audiences but also provided them with tools to evaluate, categorise, and moralise about speech. In doing so, they helped consolidate metapragmatic stereotypes that linked accents to assumptions about intelligence, respectability, or trustworthiness.

In sum, the nineteenth-century press did not simply report language change. It shaped the terms by which language was socially understood and judged. It helped naturalise the idea that certain accents were not just different, but better, more authoritative, and more 'English'. In this way, newspapers and magazines became powerful agents of linguistic socialisation, supporting the broader cultural work carried out by elocution manuals, dictionaries, and formal education.

To fully understand the ideological work carried out by the press in the nineteenth century, however, it is essential to return to its intellectual and cultural roots in the eighteenth century. The press did not invent the notion of 'correct' pronunciation, nor did it originate the belief that speech could and should reflect one's social position. Rather, it inherited and amplified a standardising agenda that had been formalised decades earlier by lexicographers, grammarians, and orthoepists. As rightly observed by Beal:

The second half of the eighteenth century was, indeed, the period when the standardisation of English pronunciation reached the codification stage, as variants became prescribed or proscribed and clear guidelines for the attainment of 'correct' pronunciation appeared in the form of pronouncing dictionaries (Beal 2010: 36).

While eighteenth-century dictionaries codified standard forms of pronunciation, it was the press in the nineteenth century that played a key role

in disseminating, entrenching, and negotiating their social meaning. Newspapers acted as a bridge between scholarly codification and popular uptake, translating abstract linguistic norms into concrete social expectations.

In developing this argument, my paper also responds to a gap identified by Görlach (1999), who noted the scarcity of reliable data on historical attitudes toward linguistic correctness and prestige. He wrote:

There is an insufficiency of reliable data on what people thought about linguistic correctness and prestige (and how such opinions related to the same person's actual usage); anecdotal evidence comes from private letters and similar documents and from the prescriptive statements in grammar books and advice in books on etiquette. Attitudes can also be reconstructed from novels and plays, although these data need to be interpreted with particular caution. The authors' main objective, then as now, is unlikely to be the provision of a realistic account; rather, they tend to employ selected sociolinguistic features to characterize their protagonists in conversation or to make them comment on others' speech forms (Görlach 1999: 26).

Görlach (1999: 26) notes that much of what we know about historical language attitudes derives from anecdotal sources such as private correspondence, literary texts, etiquette manuals, and prescriptive grammars. However, he does not account for the role of newspapers and letters to the editor – forms of public discourse that are central to the present study. As outlined above, the corpus analysed here draws on digitised archives including the *19th Century British Library Newspapers*, *The Times Digital Archive (1785-2019)*, and *Newspapers.com*. These materials demonstrate that the press not only reflected pronunciation norms but actively participated in shaping them, capturing both the instability of spoken language and the enduring influence of normative traditions. In this way, newspapers emerged not just as observers of linguistic change, but as powerful regulators of linguistic legitimacy in nineteenth-century Britain.

4. The eighteenth-century legacy: “Remove defective enunciation”

The ideological foundation for nineteenth-century language standardisation was laid in the eighteenth century through educational reforms and prescriptive publications that aimed to shape not only how English was written, but also how it was spoken. A telling example appears in an advertisement published

in *The Times* on 22 August 1800 (and reprinted on 26 September) for Charles Allen's *Orthographical Exercises*. The text promotes reading aloud as a means "to correct broad, vulgar, and provincial accent in youth", adding that such exercises would "remove defective enunciation, and serve, at the same time, as spelling exercises". This explicit objective, which focused on eliminating perceived linguistic faults through pronunciation training, reveals that pronunciation was regarded not simply as a technical matter but as a marker of moral and intellectual refinement. The association between "correct" speech and social respectability reinforced long-standing hierarchies of accent and class. Texts like Allen's helped to establish a prescriptive metalanguage that was later taken up and amplified by nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines, embedding linguistic authority within broader cultural narratives of propriety, education, and national identity.

This legacy of regulating pronunciation continued in the press, where certain phonetic features came to be closely associated with vulgarity, ignorance, or social inferiority. A particularly vivid example appears in an article from *The Blackburn Standard* (18 October 1837), which outlines the perceived features of "vulgar pronunciation" through satire and phonetic mimicry:

- (4) Vulgar pronunciation. – One of the peculiarities of vulgar English pronunciation is to put the letter *r* at the end of words ending with a vowel. Some of the inhabitants of London, if they had to speak the following sentence, A fellow broke the window, and hit Isabella on the elbow, as she was playing a suonata on the piano, – would give it in the following manner – A fellor broke the windor, and hit Isabellor on the elbor, as she was playing a sonatar on the pianor. Others adopt the contrary plan, and leave out the *r* as often as they can. There are magistrates of high pretensions to education, who would say, "The conduct of the prisona' and his general characta' render it propa' that he should no longa' be a memba' of this community." Equally glaring is the taking away of *h* from places where it is required, and giving it where its absence is desirable. The termination of words ending in *ing* with a *k*, as *somethink*, is not less incorrect or less disagreeable. (*The Blackburn Standard*, 18 October, 1837)¹

This passage offers a vivid example of how nineteenth-century print media engaged in explicit linguistic prescriptivism and social stereotyping

¹ The very same article appeared in *The Cornwall Royal Gazette*, 3 November 1837.

through mockery of nonstandard speech. The article targets two opposing tendencies – intrusive /r/ (as in *windor*, *Isabellor*) and non-rhoticity (as in *characta'*, *memba'*) – and condemns *h*-dropping and the substitution of the velar nasal /ŋ/ with a plosive /k/, as in *somethink*. These features are presented as clear signs of vulgarity and social inferiority.

Through humorous exaggeration and overt correction, the text constructs a binary opposition between “correct” and “incorrect” speech, implicitly linking pronunciation with education, propriety, and social worth. This reflects a broader pattern in which newspapers functioned as agents of language standardisation, promoting a narrow model of phonetic “correctness” while stigmatising variation. As Mugglestone (2003: 38) aptly puts it, such commentary targets “localized phonetic markers unacceptable within ideologies of ‘phonetic propriety’”, thereby contributing to the social marginalisation of nonstandard voices.

A further illustration of how pronunciation was used as a site of social distinction appears in a short anecdote reprinted in *The Times* on 4 January 1837, originally published in the *Kilkenny Journal*. It recounts the linguistic misadventure of a rural speaker entering an urban setting:

- (5) A few days since a simple country girl entered a haberdasher’s shop in this city, and, proceeding to the counter, asked, with the broad and vulgar pronunciation of the district to which she belonged – “Would you, thin, Miss, have anything that would shoot a young parson?” The fair shopkeeper, thus interrogated, looked exceedingly puzzled; she thought, at first, that the country lass had mistaken the establishment for a gunmaker’s shop, and uttered an exclamation of wonder at the question. However, an explanation was speedily obtained, when it appeared that the “rural fair” meant to ask for some article that would suit a young person. – *Kilkenny Journal* (*Kilkenny Journal*, reprinted in *The Times*, 4 January 1837).

Though humorous in tone, this anecdote is revealing in its treatment of rural dialects. The joke hinges entirely on phonetic confusion, exploiting the girl’s “broad and vulgar pronunciation” for comic effect. What is presented as a harmless misunderstanding in fact reinforces social and linguistic hierarchies. The term “vulgar” is not used descriptively but evaluatively, casting the girl’s rural speech as socially inferior. Her accent marks her as unsophisticated, and the amusement comes at her expense.

Such anecdotes were common in nineteenth-century newspapers, particularly in urban publications, where they served to entertain middle-

class readers while affirming their linguistic and cultural superiority. In this way, dialect and accent functioned not only as regional markers but as signs of education, class, and social legitimacy. This piece illustrates how language could easily become a vehicle for social exclusion, with humour operating as a means of reinforcing dominant norms and marginalising nonstandard voices.

Alongside anecdotal articles, classified advertisements, particularly want ads, also offer striking examples of sociolinguistic relevance. These brief notices reveal how deeply entrenched accent bias could be, even among the educated and aspirational upper-middle classes. The following three examples, taken from *The Times*, illustrate the role of pronunciation in constructing and policing social hierarchies in everyday life.

The first example, published on 18 October 1802, advertises for a private tutor in the family of a “respectable Country Gentleman”:

- (6) PRIVATE TUTOR. – WANTED, in the Family of a respectable Country Gentleman, residing in Ireland, a Person who will undertake the INSTRUCTION of TWO YOUNG BOYS, of gentle and amiable dispositions; and who must be perfectly well acquainted with the Greek and Latin Classics, as the Boys are to be prepared for the University. He will also be required to instruct them in French, Geography, the Use of the Globes, &c. Whoever may be appointed to this situation, will receive a very liberal Salary, and be treated with the utmost respect and attention. It is therefore expected that he shall possess the Manners and Education of a Gentleman, and be free from any Provincial Accent. (*The Times*, 18 October 1802)

This notice reveals how accent served as a final marker of acceptability, even when other indicators of class and education were firmly in place. The tutor is expected to be classically educated, morally respectable, and treated “with the utmost respect”, yet none of this compensates for the potential social risk posed by a provincial accent. This suggests that phonetic conformity operated as a gatekeeping tool, reinforcing elite boundaries and defining who could rightfully embody the role of “gentleman”.

The second advertisement, dated 5 August 1875, further illustrates the exclusionary force of pronunciation norms, this time in the context of home education:

- (7) HOME EDUCATION. – A lady, educating her little girl under a governess, wishes to meet with one or two LITTLE GIRLS to share

her studies. For terms of address K., Wood-green London, N. N.B. No child with a provincial accent can be accepted. (*The Times*, 5 August 1875)

In this case, accent functions as a marker of social contamination, explicitly barring children with non-standard pronunciation from joining what appears to be a domestic and socially exclusive educational arrangement. No explanation is provided for the restriction, which suggests that the undesirability of a provincial accent was assumed to be self-evident. The presence of terms such as “lady” and “governess” clearly situates this notice within an upper-class milieu. What is particularly striking here is that linguistic discrimination is not directed downward toward lower social strata alone; rather, it is applied laterally or even upward, excluding potential peers based solely on their manner of speech. Accent, in this context, becomes a decisive boundary marker that enforces internal hierarchies even within the socially privileged classes.

The third example, from 17 May 1838, presents perhaps the most telling case. It advertises a modest role in a girls’ school, focused primarily on domestic duties such as needlework:

- (8) WANTED, in a small school, a YOUNG PERSON to take charge of the wardrobe, and who must be in every respect a good plain needle worker. Although accomplishments are not required, she must have genteel manners, and speak the English language well and without any provincial accent; she must also be so far educated in other respects as to be able to instruct the pupils in a plain way in the absence of the principal. (*The Times*, 17 May 1838)

Despite the humble nature of the post and the limited educational requirements, the demand for accent conformity remains non-negotiable. This underscores the pervasiveness of accent-based discrimination, which extended well beyond elite professions and into working-class and semi-educated domains. The expectation that even a needleworker speak “without any provincial accent” reveals the aspirational force of standard pronunciation, which functioned as a kind of symbolic capital for those seeking to access or maintain social respectability.

Together, these examples exemplify what Mugglestone (2003: 38) describes as the rejection of “localized phonetic markers unacceptable within ideologies of ‘phonetic propriety’”. They demonstrate how accent was not treated as neutral linguistic variation but as a socially charged index of

refinement, legitimacy, and fitness for inclusion. In each case, pronunciation becomes a tool of social sorting, reinforcing boundaries within and even across the “respectable” classes.

5. Public discourses on phonological change²

In the late nineteenth century, newspapers continued to play a key role in reflecting and reinforcing public attitudes towards pronunciation, particularly in relation to ongoing phonological changes. One revealing example appears in a letter published in *The Times* on 27 December 1890, under the title “Modern English Pronunciation” and signed by “A Country Rector”³:

- (9) [I]n modern English the letter R has become, or is becoming, a silent sign, or at best a kind of half-vowel, in a large class of words in which we of an older generation were taught carefully to sound it. As a fact, the change is observable enough, its cause I am disposed to attribute not to the growth of scientific philology, but to that of pure laziness. (*The Times*, 27 December 1890)

This excerpt provides a striking illustration of how phonological change – specifically, the rise of non-rhoticity – was publicly debated and socially judged. The writer laments the disappearance of post-vocalic /r/, particularly in environments where older speakers had been taught to pronounce it clearly. Notably, the tone is not neutral or merely observational. The shift is not attributed to natural linguistic evolution or academic explanation, but instead dismissed as the product of “pure laziness”.

This moral framing is typical of prescriptive lay discourse, where linguistic changes are interpreted as signs of social or intellectual decline rather than as natural developments. By contrasting modern pronunciation with the “carefully taught” norms of an older generation, the writer positions themselves as a custodian of traditional standards, mourning what they see as a cultural and generational loss. A follow-up passage from the same letter continues the argument by pointing to minimal pairs such as “law” and “lore” or “laud” and “lord”:

² This section draws in part on material previously published in Sturiale (2018).

³ The letter is dated “December 22”.

- (10) Between ‘law’ and ‘lore’, ‘laud’ and ‘lord,’ and the like respectively, there is no difference in sound, and that so say the great doctors and professors at Oxford and elsewhere. (*The Times*, 27 December 1890)

Here, the anxiety is not only aesthetic or moral but also functional. The phonological merger resulting from the loss of /r/ is seen to undermine clarity and distinction between words. Interestingly, the writer invokes academic authorities, not to support the change, but to criticise them for allegedly condoning it. This reveals an underlying skepticism toward linguistic expertise when it appears to validate trends that the public perceives as decline. A similar concern appears in an earlier letter written by Irish phonetician James Leckey and published in *St James’s Gazette*:

- (11) To what extent the consonant *r* has been lost in actual speech is an important question of English philology. [...] Those who, like myself, always pronounce an *r* even in *iron*, can only utter an unavailing protest against this process of decay, which has confounded *father* with *farther*, *stalk* with *stork*, *Leah* with *Lear*, etc. The rising generation are satisfied, no doubt, with their own dialect, and treat our disapproval with indifference. (*St James’s Gazette*, 6 April 1883)⁴

Leckey frames the phenomenon as a “sin of omission”, and like the rector in *The Times*, links it to a broader process of linguistic decay. Though he acknowledges the descriptive work of scholars like Alexander J. Ellis, Leckey ultimately aligns with a prescriptive view, positioning himself as a defender of phonological clarity and tradition. Together, these letters exemplify how phonological shifts such as the loss of rhoticity were not simply described but ideologically charged. These changes became symbolic battlegrounds in broader cultural debates over education, authority, and generational values. Issues of pronunciation extended beyond rhoticity. The so-called “poor letter H” was also a site of controversy and social anxiety. In a letter to *The Times* dated 27 December 1856, a correspondent named Marian remarks:

- (12) I have been taught and teach that the “h” in *humble* is not aspirated and on reference to Walker’s Pronouncing Dictionary [...] I find the word “humble” classed among the words in which the “h” is not to be aspirated. Yet, Sir, I confess that at church I do frequently hear

⁴ The same letter was also published in the American newspaper *Brown County World* on 3 May 1883.

clergymen pronounce the word *humble* with an aspirate, particularly in the phrase 'humble and hearty thanks'. (*The Times*, 27 December 1856)⁵

Here, Marian invokes the authority of John Walker's dictionary, a foundational prescriptive source, to critique the perceived mispronunciation of *humble* by clergy. This example shows that even educated figures such as clergymen or barristers could be targets of public linguistic policing. Another example comes from a letter published on 7 June 1878 in *The Times*, where the pronunciation of *wh*-words was debated:

- (13) Sir, – "W. A. M." is wrong in the instances he adduces of Irishmen misplacing the "h". Let him and others who consider the pronunciation referred to incorrect consult the Dictionaries and amend their own pronunciation.

Webster's note on the subject is as follows: –

"In words beginning with *wh* the letter *h* or aspirate, when both letters are pronounced precedes the sound of *w*. Thus, *what*, *when* are pronounced *hwat*, *hwen*. So they were written by our ancestors, and so they ought to be written still, as they are by the Danes and Swedes." Walker's note (397) is to the same effect; it concludes thus: – "In the pronunciation of all words beginning with *wh* we ought to breathe forcibly before we pronounce the *w*, as if the words were written *hoo-at*, *hoo-ile*, &c., and then we shall avoid that feeble cockney pronunciation which is so disagreeable to a correct ear." Yours, &c., ALEX. COMYNS. (*The Times*, 7 June, 1878)

This letter reveals how debates over phonetic norms were rooted in appeals to historical precedent and dictionary authority, particularly Walker and Webster. The writer, Alex Comyns, insists that the "correct" pronunciation of *wh*-words should preserve the voiceless labiovelar fricative [ɱ], rather than the more common voiced approximant [w], aligning his view with both historical orthography and Scandinavian parallels. His reference to "cockney pronunciation" as "disagreeable to a correct ear" underscores how

⁵ A reader of *The Blackburn Standard*, in defining "vulgar pronunciation," listed several phonological habits to be avoided, including the use "of the letter *r* at the end of words ending with a vowel" and the pronunciation of "the termination of words ending in *-ing* with a *k*." To this, the writer added: "Equally glaring is the taking away of *h* from places where it is required, and giving it where its absence is desirable" (*The Blackburn Standard*, 18 October 1837).

regional variation was stigmatised through a class-based lens. The appeal to linguistic history, combined with overt social judgment, illustrates how phonological conservatism was employed to reinforce hierarchies of taste, education, and propriety. These issues, far from being confined to Britain, also featured in transatlantic discourse, where similar anxieties about pronunciation emerged in comparisons between British and American English. Writing in the *Preston Chronicle* on 15 October 1864, Maurice O'Connor Morris wrote:

- (14) At any rate, if the Americans murder the Queen's English in their own way [...] I am sure we do equally in ours; and certainly the letter 'h' has a 'better time of it' with them than with us: indeed on the whole, I think that, man for man and woman for woman, the Americans speak better English than ourselves; though I believe our highest standard to be above theirs. – *Maurice O'Connor Morris. (Preston Chronicle, 15 October 1864)*

Here, American and British phonetic usage is compared with a hint of self-deprecating humour, acknowledging that while American English is often mocked, British English is equally flawed – particularly in its treatment of /h/.

Finally, a letter published in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on 8 May 1887 criticises English pronunciation of *wh*-words from an American perspective:

- (15) We have had English actors and actresses enough during the present dramatic season to be able to make comparison of English vs. American pronunciation of our common language [...]. En revanche we have incessantly caught the Englishman uttering "wich", "ware", "wy" and "wen", for the American's "which", "where" and "when". (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 8 May 1887*)

This comparison adds an international dimension to the discourse, demonstrating that pronunciation was also central to debates about national identity and linguistic authority.

Together, these letters and articles highlight how phonological changes in features such as rhoticity and the pronunciation of *wh*-words were not only debated within scholarly circles but also actively contested in the public sphere. Pronunciation became a focal point in broader ideological conflicts involving tradition, education, authority, and class, with newspapers serving as key platforms for expressing, enforcing, and challenging linguistic norms.

6. Continuities into the twentieth century: Defining and defending 'proper' speech

To justify the use of the phrase "the long nineteenth century" in the title of this paper, I want to conclude by drawing attention to two early twentieth-century examples, both of which reflect the enduring legacy of prescriptive ideologies that took root in the late 1700s and would later find institutional form in developments such as the BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English.

The first piece, published in *The Times* on 10 August 1923 under the title "Phonetics and Obstinacy", opens with a striking observation:

- (16) Even standard English, after the phoneticians have fixed it, is subject to ceaseless modification, with which it may be hard for phonetics to keep pace. A single solecism, or oddity, may injure a speaker as much as a hundred; and yet a hundred – such is convention – will not be as dangerous as one. There are provincial accents which are received into polite society, others that are not. The Scottish, for instance, will pass muster where the Devonian or East Anglian will fail. It would be interesting to watch an attempt by phoneticians to bring the Caledonians into line. As in other spheres of persuasion there are apt to be classes which missionaries agree to ignore, so it is, it may be suspected, in the field of speech. When the zealot is faced with no alternative to trying his powers of conversion, as the phrase is, "on the dog," onlookers may be forgiven if, out of sympathy for that companionable creature, they are mildly amused when the tyke prefers obstinately to take no notice. His indifference, we observe, is not considered very important by Mr. Fisher. (*The Times*, 10 August 1923)

This commentary captures several key themes at the heart of early twentieth-century attitudes toward speech. First, it acknowledges the instability of "standard English", pointing out that even after being codified by phoneticians, it remains subject to continuous and unpredictable modification. The distinction drawn between Scottish pronunciation, which "passes muster", and other regional accents like Devonian or East Anglian, which are said to fail, underscores the social arbitrariness of accent prestige. In this context, phonetic correctness becomes less about linguistic clarity and more about social capital.

Particularly telling is the ironic suggestion that phoneticians might try to "bring the Caledonians into line". This remark highlights the absurdity of attempting to enforce uniform pronunciation across culturally and

regionally distinct communities. The metaphor of the “zealot” attempting to convert a dog, who remains cheerfully indifferent, reinforces the view that language reform often meets with benign resistance and that speakers with strong local identities may simply choose not to conform. The article thus casts doubt on the effectiveness of top-down linguistic prescription while also acknowledging its persistence as a cultural ideal.

By combining social commentary with humour and satire, the piece reflects broader anxieties about class, authority, and the perceived erosion of linguistic standards. It anticipates institutional efforts to define “proper” pronunciation – most notably, the BBC’s later work on Received Pronunciation – while also questioning their legitimacy and impact.

The second article, published in *The Times* (5 March 1924, p. 12), addresses a public disagreement over the pronunciation of the word *isolate*, with one speaker defending *eye-solate* against George Bernard Shaw’s preferred *issolate*. The anonymous dramatic critic writes:

- (17) Just one word more, the last so far as I am concerned, about the pronunciation of “isolate.” Mr. Shaw referred me to the “pronouncing dictionaries.” I went, as was natural to an Englishman when his own use of English was in question, to the one indisputable authority, the Oxford English Dictionary, which confirmed me in pronouncing “isolate” as eye-solate. Mr. Shaw counters, on behalf of “issolate,” with an American, a couple of Scotchmen, and a German. And he adds the weight of his own authority to inform us that “ice-olate is a vulgar pronunciation.” I am afraid I cannot defer to any one of the five. I would repeat what Johnson said to Boswell about the pronouncing dictionary contemplated by Sheridan (“Old Sherry”): “Sir, what entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman.” And so, when Mr. Shaw condemns my pronunciation of “isolate” because “the ambiguity” (why “ambiguity”?) “and ugliness of the long ‘i’ make it impossible for any speaker with an intelligent ear,” I think he is forgetting the difference between English and Irish (or American or Scotch or German) ears – a difference which is not altogether without its importance when the ugliness of English vowel-sounds is in question. Be that as it may, the Oxford Dictionary is good enough for me. (*The Times*, 5 March 1924)

This article combines wit and polemic to frame pronunciation not merely as a matter of linguistic preference but as a question of cultural authority.

The writer's appeal to the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the one indisputable authority" draws a firm boundary between legitimate and illegitimate voices in pronunciation debates. Crucially, the quotation of Dr Johnson's remark about Thomas Sheridan ("He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman") echoes a familiar eighteenth-century prejudice already discussed in Section 2. That this jibe resurfaces more than a century later underscores the persistence of ethno-linguistic bias and the long shadow cast by Enlightenment-era orthoepic debates. In this context, pronunciation becomes not just a phonetic concern but a means of affirming national identity, cultural legitimacy, and hierarchical control over the English language.

7. Concluding remarks

Throughout this paper, I have shown how newspapers, alongside their readers, played a central role in identifying, disseminating, and legitimising a normative model of spoken English. Like the eighteenth-century orthoepists and elocutionists, the press contributed to what Agha (2003: 231) describes as the transformation of pronunciation into a "status emblem". Yet this process was not simply top-down. Letters to the editor, in particular, offered a participatory space in which ordinary readers voiced their views, debated authoritative claims, and helped draw the boundaries of acceptability and deviance in speech.

As Lesley Milroy (1999: 173) has noted, debates over standard English are marked by a paradox: both experts and laypeople invest heavily in an idealised norm that is never fully attainable. Far from undermining its authority, this unattainability seems only to intensify its ideological pull. What this paper has aimed to show is that the effort to define and defend "proper" pronunciation was not confined to a specific period. It spanned what we might call a long nineteenth century, a period marked not only by the codification of linguistic norms but also by their ongoing negotiation, enforcement, and contestation in the pages of the press.

This study has argued that pronunciation debates were not merely reflections of linguistic change, but active sites for the construction and contestation of social identity. Accent became a shorthand for broader concerns about class, morality, respectability, and national belonging. Newspapers functioned as mediating agents in this process, amplifying the voices of both institutional authorities and everyday speakers. In doing so, they created a uniquely public forum for linguistic ideology, where the normative power of pronunciation could be reaffirmed, ridiculed,

or resisted. By answering Görlach's (1999) call for more reliable data on historical language attitudes, this paper has also highlighted the value of the press as an archive of linguistic consciousness. Editorials, advertisements, satirical commentary, and reader correspondence together constitute a rich body of evidence through which we can trace not only how English was spoken, but how it was heard, judged, and socially valorised.

This British context also invites comparative reflection. Paulsen's (2022a, 2022b) work on the enregisterment of American English in nineteenth-century U.S. newspapers provides a compelling model for exploring how similar ideological processes unfolded in a different national setting. A transatlantic comparative approach could deepen our understanding of how press discourse shaped – and was shaped by – divergent cultural ideals of language, identity, and authority. Such research would help map the distinctive yet parallel roles that British and American newspapers played in constructing pronunciation as a social emblem.

What emerges from this analysis is a picture of standard pronunciation as a moving target, subject to intense social scrutiny and ideological investment. Its definition depended as much on who was speaking as on how they spoke. Despite its elusiveness – or perhaps precisely because of it – the ideal of 'proper' speech became a powerful mechanism for establishing social distinction. In this way, pronunciation norms helped structure the symbolic boundaries of Englishness itself, shaping who could speak with authority and who, quite literally, remained out of place.

As the twentieth-century examples demonstrate, the ideological framework built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not simply disappear with modernity. On the contrary, it evolved into institutionalised norms that continued to shape public perceptions of linguistic propriety. The long shadow of prescriptive thought reveals the persistence of an older logic: that how one speaks can and should be a marker of who one is.

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Fanning fires. A corpus assisted analysis of women's letters during the 1857-58 Indian uprisings

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ABSTRACT

A paucity of studies has focused on propaganda in the mid-1800s, as the term was mostly linked to education and public opinion formation in a positive sense whilst its pejorative meaning was acquired from WWI onwards. However, during the 1857-58 uprisings in India, the press published a number of letters written home from the colony which fanned fires against the Indians within the Victorian public. This study analyses a small corpus of private letters written by women during the Indian uprisings and published in the British press (WOPLEPIU). At the time, women were stereotyped as domestic creatures, helpless victims of Indian aggression, incapable of developing personal views whereas their letters include personal evaluations and may be considered as a form of propaganda. The methodology adopted is a mixed one. It starts with a corpus-driven approach followed by a corpus assisted discourse analysis of chosen key words and their clusters to analyse quantitatively and qualitatively their recurring phraseology. The findings indicate that women's letters provide not only factual details but also personal perspectives, thus challenging the stereotyped role of Victorian women while their letters were used for propagandistic reasons.

Keywords: Women, letters, propaganda, British press, uprisings, corpus linguistics

1. Introduction

The outbreaks of unrest among the Indian troops marked the beginning of a crisis which, according to Dawson (1995) was termed the 1857-58 Indian or sepoy 'mutiny', or the first 'national-popular imperialist war fought by Britain in its Empire, or, in nationalist terms, the 'First War of Independence' (Blunt 2000). The causes of the uprising were and are still contested. Bhargava (1992) claims that imperial narratives have tended to focus on the

rumour that cartridges for new Enfield rifles had been greased with beef and pork fat. Having to bite into such cartridges before using them to shoot meant both Hindu and Muslim infantry soldiers, known as sepoys, were forced to break their religious faith. By contrast, most contemporary debates about the causes of the 'uprisings' consider they derived from situations that transcend simplistic categorisations as, for example, the grievances which were inseparable from subjection of the Indian population to foreign rule; the often very faint boundary between 'revolt' and 'collaboration' of the Calcutta Intelligentsia that regarded the British with contempt; the widening distance and intense growing disaffection between the Indian infantry soldiers and the officers of the British East India Company; the lack of empathy from the military administration to social discrimination (Chatterjee 2024; Bandeh-Ahmadi 2024; Bayly 1987, to mention a few).

The East India Company ruled on behalf of the British Crown during the first two decades of Queen Victoria's reign and annexed the province of Oudh in 1856. During the following year, detachments of the Bengal army mutinied in the garrison town Meerut, killing several British officers and setting fire to the cantonment, before marching to Delhi and declaring the Mughal king, Bahadur Shah II, the reinstated ruler of Hindustan. Such actions have been considered consequential to the British deposing several noble Indians from their thrones without significant support from the Indian population (Blunt 2000; Samson 2020a, 2020b, 2022).

By 1857, the revolts spread throughout central and northern India as the rebels captured large tracts of the North-Western Provinces and Awadh (Oudh), where the uprisings were also characterized by widespread agrarian unrest (Blunt 2000). The key episode was the Cawnpore uprising in which the East India Company forces and civilians were caught unprepared to bear an extended siege and were forced to surrender to the rebel forces under Nana Sahib, an aristocrat, in return for a safe passage to Allahabad. However, their evacuation from Cawnpore turned into a massacre on 27 June 1857 along the Ganges as the 120 British women and children captured by the sepoys were killed in the Bibighar massacre. Their remains were thrown down a nearby well in the attempt to hide evidence, as the East India Company rescue force approached Cawnpore which was retaken. The uprising was brutally suppressed by more than 35,000 soldiers sent from Britain by June 1858. The Indian uprisings were the first serious challenge to British rule and it was used by the British to emphasize a cruel, evil and inferior image of the Indians seen also as superstitious and distrustful people who were rejecting the benefits of civilization offered to them by Britain (Nair 1996).

During the uprisings, not only men but also English women wrote home describing the dramatic conditions they were experiencing and, to reduce the paucity of information received from India, several of their letters were published in the press. On the one hand, the letters provided first-hand information, on the other hand, women provided many personal impressions of the tragic events taking place, they therefore easily involved emotionally their readership. By providing such impressions, the letters were viewed as useful to legitimise the military actions in India and encourage the government to send troops from England.

In order to investigate the language used by such 'organised persuasion', as De Vito (1986) names propaganda, this study aims to extend the present literature by analysing a small corpus of letters written by women to their relatives in England and published in English¹ newspapers during the Indian uprisings. An initial corpus driven approach followed by a corpus assisted discourse analysis (CAD) is adopted and it is integrated with discourse analysis to qualitatively interpret the recurring semantic sequences (Groom 2005; Charles 2006; Hunston 2008) in the attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which key lexical items are used by the English women to represent the 1857-58 uprisings in their letters?
- 2) Which semantic sequences encode the women's personal perspectives of the uprisings and are used for persuasive propagandistic purposes?

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: section two focuses on propaganda and women's letters published in the press during the uprisings; section three describes the corpus and the methods adopted whereas section four analyses the data. Conclusions are drawn in section five.

2. Propaganda and women's letters in the press

2.1 Propaganda

Most researchers have concentrated on the twentieth century pejorative meaning of propaganda, principally due to the impact of the First and Second World Wars' horrors of the authoritarian contamination of the term.

¹ In the journalistic representations of the uprisings, the diverse British identities are subsumed into the imperial identity 'English'. However, when referring to the newspapers published at the time in England, Scotland and Ireland I use the contemporary inclusive adjective British.

The latter was linked to systematic governmental campaigns carried out under the aegis of centralised propaganda departments and its negative connotations were completely cemented at least by the 1960s (Jarlbrink – Norén 2023).

Before 1914, though, propaganda had a wider meaning. In the early seventeenth century, the Catholic church used propaganda when referring to the propagation of faith to the entire world (Prendergast – Prendergast 2013) and, during the following three hundred years, the concept spread to various social and political spheres. Schieder and Dipper (1984) argue that the modern meaning of ‘propaganda’ has its roots in the aftermath of the French revolution, as counter revolutionary groups started to label revolutionary activities as ‘propaganda’, meaning something destructive and terrorising. By contrast, during the nineteenth century, propaganda acquired not only an educational connotation but also the function of forming public opinion through newspapers. This benevolence towards the press implies the acceptance of its persuasive power and the consequent forging of an extensive bond between it and the political spheres since, as Hampton (2004) states, there was an established tradition of politicians, government officials, groups, and individuals patronising newspapers and individuals to communicate and promote their policies.

As a matter of fact, propaganda and persuasion have been used interchangeably for long, although they differ. A fundamental feature of propaganda is an intentional communication of a message to the public. More specifically, Jowett and O’Donnell (2018) argue that propaganda is a subcategory of persuasion, as well as information. Propaganda focuses on the communication process – most specifically, on the purpose of the process. Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.

A deliberate attempt is usually linked with a clear institutional ideology and objective (Jowett – O’Donnell 2018). The purpose of propaganda is therefore to convey an ideology to an audience with a related objective which in this study is the preservation of English rule in India. However, to be effective in shaping the public’s perceptions, the communication has to be persuasive. O’Donnell and Kable (1982: 9) define *persuasion* as a communicative process to influence others. A persuasive message has a point of view or desired behaviour for the recipient to adopt in a voluntary fashion. Persuasion is a complex, continuing, interactive process in which a sender and a receiver are linked by symbols, verbal and nonverbal, through

which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behaviour because the persuadee has had perceptions enlarged or changed. Schiappa (2003) argues that words are always persuasive because they carry with them a whole system of values, and the use of a word is always an implicit argument to attain certain goals by means of the system of evaluation the definition of the word defends. Newspapers, therefore, played a pivotal role not only in informing but also in persuading readers to believe the content of the narrations within the published letters which were used to promote specific colonial ideologies of the time (Samson 2025) as well as accept the English seditious activities in India.

2.2 Women's letters in the press

During the 1857-58 uprisings in India, not only the electric telegraph line was still slow and unreliable with news reaching Britain after up to five weeks but, as Randall (2003) claims, the paucity of journalists on the ground led to a coverage of the events often consisting of reproducing stories from local papers, questionable depositions, muddled accounts, dubious journals, narratives of shell-shocked survivors, factual accounts and surmises by worried people in troubling times. Within such a system, reports could be biased, or a falsehood could be amplified without any real editing.

In attempting to meet the public's demand of information, newspapers would print private letters from India which were clearly demarcated from reporting. The letters appear to have been posted by the addressors in India to their family members in England and can therefore be considered familiar documents. Furthermore, unlike most letters to the editor taken into consideration in extant literature, these were not written by high profile contributors responding to a specific matter mentioned either in a newspaper article, editorial, a previous letter to the editor, or to initiate a new conversation on a publicly relevant topic (Samson 2025). By contrast, the private letters analysed in this study were often published in British newspapers to fill in news gaps (Samson 2020a) as, on the one hand, they contextualised the uprisings by providing first-hand information and, on the other hand, they underwent a re-contextualisation of their original private communicative context.

Although the letters appear to have been sent from India, their authenticity has generated doubts. Slettvoll Kristiansen (2021) states that there is ample evidence to suggest that newspapers published letters that had been paid for by individuals or groups who wished to disseminate

a particular message for their own benefit. This suggests that interest groups might have paid to have their texts on the uprisings published by newspapers but to date this is still a hypothesis. Furthermore, it was not unusual to find the same letters initially published by *The Times* then undergoing the 'scissor and paste' or 'textual mingling' practice and later being recycled in peripheral newspapers to amplify and reinforce the same message or similar ones, as news is not simply that which happens, but what is worth conveying when it is considered interesting for its details and for the impact it can have on people's lives, even when it is of uncertain quality (Fowler 1991: 13).

Through such journalistic strategies, it is therefore likely that private letters turned from unmediated into highly mediated texts, including those of editorial selectivity (Gregory – Hutchins 2004) which were deliberately published to partially inform but above all to produce reactions – taken into careful consideration (Jowett – O'Donnell 2018) – deriving from atrocity stories which might have been real or invented. What counted most is that the letters had to persuade the public to accept and preferably support their own side's actions in the conflict (Nohrstedt 2009). In such a context, the language used within the letters published in the press can be viewed as an instrument of domination and social power considering that, as Wodak (2001), Fairclough (2001) and van Dijk (2011) argue, language is a suitable medium for covering and uncovering hidden ideologies intended to construct social norms and values.

The publication of women's letters was therefore a means to fan fires, that is to generate a cry for vengeance of the English in India. Such a reaction might have been intensified when reading the impressionistic narrations of the dramatic events the English women were experiencing. These features had also several other purposes. They provided a sense of authenticity to the communication conveyed; the repeated use of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'we' allowed the readership to identify with the writers and to develop a sense of membership of the newspaper community publishing them (Warren 2000; Conboy 2010; Chapman 2013). Moreover, they contributed to the development of 'civic engagement' to be understood as an appraisal of issues which were pre-selected as of 'public' significance that not only permeated mid-Victorian society and allowed ordinary people to make sense of major events and crises unfolding around them, but they may be considered as a powerful tool of colonial propaganda generating strong common national and instinctual responses to the attacks on the English rule and identity.

3. Corpus and methods

3.1 Corpus

In order to attempt answering the mentioned research questions, I specially compiled a small specialised corpus of Women's Letters – WOPLEPIU (43,000 words) – written during the 1857-58 Indian Uprisings and Published in the English Press. The number of letters written by women and published in the press is extremely limited – 22 – compared to those by men and it clearly indicates the different role women had in society as well as the choice of the editors to publish prevalently men's letters. However, women's letters with their very personal evaluations and perspectives suggest the capacity to create stronger impressions in their readers.

WOPLEPIU for its limited dimension allows a systematic analysis of natural language produced during the uprisings and it serves representative non-biased samples of authentic language. This can be objectively analysed by the observer without allowing any intra-personal characteristics to interfere with the scientific interpretation of the data (Hiltunen – Loureiro-Porto 2020). Furthermore, in a small specialised corpus the documents collected are domain specific, contextually well-anchored and they facilitate not only a careful "horizontal reading" but also manual processing that allows a close reading of its texts, as argued by Taavitsainen (2018) and Vaughan and Clancy (2013). This is an important advantage, as close reading provides a chance to reveal features which otherwise would be less obvious (Hiltunen – Loureiro-Porto 2020: 4), even though McEnery and Baker (2016: 3-6) claim that "the issue of size becomes acute when one tries to use such corpora to explore words of what one might describe as moderate or low frequency; there is simply not enough data to make generalizations". However, although large corpora contain higher frequencies and a broader range of genres, the results are not always possible to be re-contextualised, especially in corpora providing access to a limited amount of co-text and lacking detailed information regarding other contextual aspects (Samson – Bös 2021).

All the letters in WOPLEPIU were downloaded from the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) and were saved in txt format without "cleaning" them. Those which were unreadable were instead not taken into consideration. Table 1 lists the British newspapers² from which the letters were downloaded.

² *The Morning Advertiser* was first published in 1794 by the London Society of Licensed Victuallers. It was devoted to trade interests, rather than to the support of a political

Table 1. 1857-58 uprisings – British Newspapers including women’s letters

<i>The Morning Advertiser</i>
<i>The Inverness Courier</i>
<i>The Saunder’s News-Letter</i>
<i>The Edinburgh Evening Courant</i>
<i>The Armagh Guardian</i>
<i>The Globe</i>
<i>The Worcestershire Chronicle</i>
<i>The Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>
<i>The Cork Examiner</i>

The letters appear to have been private, as they address relatives in Britain and were prevalently written by East India Company army officials’ wives who followed their husbands across British India in the various cantonments, that is, military stations wherein they lived. Other letters were by missionaries and other unspecified women informing their addressees about their dramatic experiences in India.

3.2 Methods

The methodological approach I adopted in this study is a multiple one. Firstly, I started with a corpus-driven approach in which the researcher is committed to the integrity of the data as a whole, and the descriptions of language emerge from the corpus itself (Tognini-Bonelli 2001; Sinclair 1992, 2004).

In 1718, the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* began publication, being first printed by John McQueen or McEwen on the Royal Mile then passing to his protege, Alexander Kincaid in 1735. It survived until the *Edinburgh Evening News* came into existence in 1873. It was founded by James Watson (who had also published the *Edinburgh Gazette* from 1700) and had its main printing office was at Craigs Close at 170 High Street on the Royal Mile, the premises generally being known as the King’s Printing House. In 1725, during the time of the Scottish Malt Tax riots, rival political factions used – or at least attempted to use – newspapers including the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* and the *Caledonian Mercury* as their “mouthpieces”, as a letter from the then book trade apprentice Andrew Millar indicates. party. Its circulation, however, fostered by the society, was, in mid 19th century second only to that of *The Times*. Founded in 1794 as *The Publican’s Morning Advertiser*, it is the UK’s oldest continuously produced paper. In 1858 the paper became the first newspaper to subscribe to Reuters’ news service.

The first issue of *The Inverness Courier and General Advertiser for the Counties of Inverness, Ross, Moray, Nairn, Cromarty, Sutherland and Caithness* appeared on 4 Dec 1817. The first editors were Mr. John and Mrs. Johnstone until 1824. Dr. Robert Carruthers was editor from April 1828 till his death in 1878. Today *The Inverness Courier* is published by Scottish Provincial Press, *The Saunders’s News-Letter* was published from 1755 to 1879 and was one of Dublin’s most established newspapers. During its publication, the paper was commercially successful. In order to publish a daily morning paper, printing began just after midnight. *Saunders’s News-Letter* was noted for its remarkably neutral journalism. Thomas Power O’Connor began his career in journalism at the *Saunders’s News-Letter* in 1867. O’Connor became a Member of

This allows to extract the relative most frequent word lists and key word lists which surface directly from WOPLEIU, without being adjusted to fit pre-existing categories of the analyst.

The analysis therefore started by applying Word Smith Tools (WST) version 7 (Scott 2016) to WOPLEIU, in order to generate a word list to then attain a key word list by comparing it with a Reference Corpus (RC), specifically, the Corpus of Late Modern British English Extended Version (CLMETEV) of 15 million words. This includes various text genres such as personal letters, literary fiction, scientific writing by men/women belonging to different social classes of 18th-19th century British society, ranging between 1710-1920.

Parliament for the Home Rule League. Later in his career, after the demise of the Irish Nationalist Party, O'Connor continued as an Independent MP. He founded and was the editor of several newspapers.

The *Armagh Guardian* 1844-71 was published by an unknown publisher in Armagh, Northern Ireland.

The Globe was a British newspaper that ran from 1803 to 1921. During the 1820s it supported radical politics, and was regarded as closely associated with Jeremy Bentham. By the 1840s it received briefings from within the Whig administration.

The *Worcestershire Chronicle* was founded on 4 January 1838 as "a new weekly paper devoted to the County". It was established by a joint stock company whose shareholders contributed £5000 of capital. The Chairman was Edward Holland Esq. and shareholders included three Members of Parliament and the Mayor of Worcester. The first issue of the *Chronicle* declared that it would hold to liberal principles based on truth and justice, and the full enjoyment to all men of civil and religious liberty". It would not exist as a "convenient medium for personal invective or party calumny". However, there was a recognised need for a county newspaper which would defend liberal principles against the Tory principles of other local papers, particularly *Berrow's Worcester Journal*. The *Worcestershire Chronicle* adhered to its liberal principles throughout its life and boasted a large circulation for many years.

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* was Sheffield's first daily newspaper, published in 1855 by bookseller, printer and patent medicine dealer, Joseph Pearce. In 1864, Pearce sold on to Frederick Clifford and William Leng. was discontinued along with its sister paper, the *Worcestershire Herald*, in 1930. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, edited by Leng, adopted a Conservative stance in opposition to the *Liberal Sheffield Independent*, run by the Leader family since 1829, but his aim was to give the Conservative Party cause wider appeal. The *Telegraph* was one of the first newspapers to introduce linotype printing, whereby a whole line of type could be produced at one time. Faster typesetting by fewer operatives increased output allowing newspapers to increase the number of pages per issue.

The Cork Examiner was founded by John Francis Maguire under the title in 1841 in support of the Catholic Emancipation and tenant rights work of Daniel O'Connell. First published in 1841 *The Cork Examiner* can be considered a national newspaper with a regional emphasis. The newspaper was published three times a week. In July 1861 it became a daily newspaper. During the Irish War of Independence and Irish Civil War, the *Cork Examiner* (along with other nationalist newspapers) was subject to censorship and suppression.

Secondly, I drew on the Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) approach (Partington 2004, 2010; Lombardo 2009) which is hypothesis-driven and aims to disclose the discourse type(s) under investigation and uses corpora for replicable quantitative techniques and evidence of the semantic patterns emerging within the corpus by applying WST 7.

The semantic patterns consist of the core word, the patterns associated with that word and a number of phrase types occurring with the core word which are, in spite of being diverse in form, consistent in terms of meaning (Hunston 2008). The analysis of the patterns provides the identification of the discursive functions and strategies through discourse analysis (Partington et al. 2013; Mautner 2016) which uncovers meaning that is not open to direct observation, since language is used by making semi-conscious choices within the various complex overlapping systems of which language is composed. Thirdly, I interpreted qualitatively the recurring semantic patterns which construe meaning beyond their immediate lexico-semantic associations (Bondi 2008: 35).

My key word choice – Delhi³, sepoy, our – derived from the list generated by WST 7. More specifically, Delhi was based on the assumption that, firstly, the letter writers repeatedly referred to place names where the uprisings were taking place and where they were trapped. While this had a referential function in providing geographical contextualisation as to where the events were occurring, the purpose was also to create and share an environment through which the reader could understand and experience the events. In addition, within a place layer of intersecting meanings, social relations and overlapping time and space come together (Massey 1995) and contribute to persuade readers of the need to dedicate attention to the facts represented.

Sepoys represent the enemy, the Other which gave way to the uprisings that challenged the English rule and are narrated through the English women's gaze. Van Dijk (2006) argues that the strategy of negative other presentation is very typical in a biased account of the facts in favour of the writer's own interests, while blaming negative situations and events on opponents or on the Others.

³ *Cawnpore*, the place in which the major massacre of women and children took place during the uprisings and that symbolised the imperial crisis as a civil war while revealing the inseparability of national and imperial power, honour, and prestige (Samson 2025) is mentioned in very few letters. As a consequence, the relative low frequency of the place name is linked to a lack of cluster collocations which determined its exclusion from this study.

The possessive adjective *our* refers to the English women as well as to the wider English community, that is, the *Us* group which encodes multiple referents, apart from the addressor and addressee/s of the letters, the governors, officers and troops of the East India Company, the English civilians in India at the time, that is all those involved directly or indirectly in the uprisings, while denoting a sense of colonial community extended to the metropolis (Samson 2025).

I investigated the recurring chosen key words in their collocational patterns, that is, the tendency of words, or group of words, to occur more frequently in some environments than others (Hunston 2010). These phraseological arrangements are based on the assumption that words are not to be seen as elements in isolation that can be slotted into syntactic frameworks, but as forming larger units of meaning (Sinclair 1996; Römer 2010). Since the meaning of words lies in their use and the latter cannot exist in isolation, use can only be recognised and analysed contextually and functionally. Consequently, I consider language to be characterised by continuous repetitions forming semantic patterns that is “sequences of words and phrases which may be very diverse in form and which are therefore more usefully characterised as sequences of meaning elements rather than as formal sequences” (Hunston 2008: 271). These mirror the specific situational context of the uprisings in 1857-58 India that make the language unique to the particular environment of Bengal. I then integrated the quantitative analysis with a qualitative interpretation of the recurring data to foreground how the women letter writers express themselves while providing personal representations of the conflicts they and others were involved in.

4. Data analysis

Wordsmith Tools 7 (Scott 2016) detected 305 key words according to their frequency in the corpus compared to the RC. I then applied the CADS hypothesis-driven approach in choosing the words which denote the uprisings and the actors involved, as listed in Table 2.

In Table 2, the first column shows the key word; the second, shows its frequency in the source text(s) – WOPLEPIU; the third, the percentage of the frequency; the fourth indicates the number of texts it was present in WOPLEPIU; the fifth its frequency in the reference corpus (CLMETEV); in the sixth the Log likelihood (LL.) statistic of keyness, that is to say, their

significance in WOPLEPIU; in the seventh, the Log ratio statistic showing the strength of keyness and in the last column the p value, that is, the keyness value of the item under consideration.

Table 2. WOPLEPIU Key words

Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	Log_L (LL)	Log R	P
DELHI	80	0,19	18	28	950,65	11,20	0,0000000000
SEPOYS	38	0,09	12	11	458,08	11,47	0,0000000000
OUR	312	0,74	18	60	427,69	2,10	0,0000000000

The first key word in Table 2 is the place name, *Delhi* (Freq. 80; LL. 950,65), followed by the common noun, *sepoys* (Freq. 38; LL. 458,08) and the possessive adjective, *our* (Freq. 312; LL. 427,69), referring to the English community. The keyness of the three words chosen suggests a relative high frequency of Delhi and a strong polarisation between the Other/sepoys group and the US/English one in the letters. Therefore an analysis of the collocations for each key word will allow to highlight the various meanings these different key words acquire in the letters.

4.1 Delhi

The Concord programme of WST 7 was applied to the key place name *Delhi* to access information about its collocations, an extract of which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Concordance – Delhi

1	mutinies at Meerut and Delhi our regiment showed symptoms
2	in expectation of news from Delhi , but none arrived. All depends
3	Commander-in-Chiefs proceedings in Delhi become very intense
4	heard of those at Meerut and Delhi , and that the Native Infantry
5	the regiment was ordered to Delhi , and I was most thankful when

Delhi collocates most frequently with grammar words (of, to, at, from, in, toward), stative verbs (be, have, remain, retain), action verbs (take, march, go, destroy, tame, join, assault, return, send, arrive, accompany, kill, move, fill), mental verbs related to intellectual not observable actions (believe, suppose, appear, hear, fear) as well as with adjectives (European, scarce, immense,

large, intense) and common nouns (news, ammunitions, rebels, infantry, Europeans, corps, reinforcements, soldiers, accounts, things). The collocates suggest that the main concern of the letter writers was receiving news and/or narrating their emotions connected to the succession of military events to their relatives back home in England.

Given that the meaning of concordance strings can emerge only if considered within a wider context, I consider it crucial to go beyond the above textual snippets by, on the one hand, considering them within their source text and, on the other hand, linking them outwards to a wider meaning context by analysing the patterns created by recurring semantic sequences. The latter allow to highlight the connotations which give sense to the phraseology of place names in different situational contexts and to underline their uniqueness in WOPLEPIU.

For example, Delhi's recurring relative most frequent semantic pattern V + *news from Delhi* refers to the crucial role of news, as in excerpt (1):

- (1) Last night we were much cheered by *the news from Delhi* of the destruction of the powder manufactory with 500 gunpowder makers. In fact, the rebels are getting dispirited.

In excerpt (1) the sequence of action recording sentences is typified by temporal relativity, that is, the use of past and present relative to the discursive present of letter communication that characterises the mix of written and oral discourse which is constantly used in such texts. Specifically, the encoder's narration of factual phenomena refers to time (*last night*) whereas the semantic pattern *the news from Delhi* refers anaphorically to the passive past tense *were cheered* which is used to foreground the succession of phenomena characterised by evaluation. Hunston and Thompson (2000: 5) define evaluation as a "broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about". Furthermore, Bednarek (2010) claims that evaluation typifies news discourse, since it reflects 'news values' (Bell 1991; Brighton – Foy 2007) and construes relationships with readers while structuring the news texts and shaping the readers' perceptions of the situation.

As to this point, the semantic pattern *the news from Delhi* also refers cataphorically to the *destruction of the powder manufactory* wherein the noun *destruction* followed by the detailed factual information, *500 gunpowder makers*, underscores the writer's subjective satisfaction for the goal achieved by the English while the details provided contribute to the credibility of the

news. Moreover, the encoder uses the discourse marker *in fact* to introduce a phenomenon-identifying sentence *the rebels are getting dispirited* which reinforces the writer's evaluative representation of the Other/sepoys and underscores her satisfaction for their annihilation.

By contrast, the semantic pattern *news from Delhi* is loaded with negative emotivity in excerpt (2):

- (2) No good *news from Delhi* yet. We have 24-pounders, but only ammunitioners; and when they were going to get the howitzers into play they found they had no metal fuses.

In (2), the narration is characterised by present and past verb tenses (*have, were going to get, found*) referring to a succession of action recording sentences which are introduced by the coordinating conjunction *but* linking contrasting situations (*We have 24-pounders, but only ammunitioners*) that underline a negative evaluation. This negative view is further reinforced by the temporal subordinating conjunction *when* referring to the impossibility of the English to use their cannons since there were no fuses to detonate the explosive charge and inflict maximum damage on the sepoys (*when they were going to get the howitzers into play, they found they had no metal fuses*). The representation provided, apart from highlighting the encoder's disappointment deriving from the lack of adequate armaments to fight the sepoys, provides factual information which is used to make the readers understand the urgent need for the government to intervene by sending ammunitions and troops to India.

4.2 Sepoys

The Concord programme of WST 7 was then applied to the key noun *Sepoys*, to access information about its collocations, an extract of which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Concordance – Sepoys

1	children of impulse are these Sepoys that they will one hour good service
2	Takes his couch in the midst of his Sepoys , and you can fancy the sort
3	next morning at day light the Sepoys were asked to give up their arms
4	In that station the Sepoys or native soldiers were joined by surrounding
5	ioined there by their brother Sepoys , and mastered all the Europeans

Sepoys co-occurs most frequently with grammar words (*of, to, at*), stative verbs (*be, have*), action verbs (*join, guard, give, come, fight, disarm, make, burn, leave*), nouns (*regiment, army, night, morning*) but also with determiners (*some, several*), possessive/pronouns (*they, their, our*), adjectives (*faithful, treacherous, native*) and adverbs (*after, when, now*).

The most recurring semantic pattern *the Sepoys were + V* can be seen, for instance, in excerpt (3):

- (3) In that station *the Sepoys were* joined by the surrounding villagers, massacred an infinity of Europeans, before the British troops could be here.

In excerpt (3) the semantic pattern refers anaphorically to spatial deixis *In that station* that serves prototypically to draw the reader's attention to a specific point and new aspect of an existing one of the discourse that is derived by the situational context of utterance whose centre point is the 'here and now' of the narration within the letter. Moreover, the recording of successive actions – *joined by the surrounding villagers, massacred an infinity of Europeans* – provides factual information loaded with a negative emotive connotation that foregrounds the highly dangerous context. This high sense of horror is further reinforced by the use of the adjective *infinity* referring to the extremely high number of *Europeans* being massacred before the arrival of the British troops. The purpose of the communication is to inform the reader about the dramatic situation the English were in, deriving from the uprisings involving not only the sepoys but also the villagers, thus generating strong distress in the readers while encouraging mutual understanding of the information and underlining the highly negative connotations of the Other.

In excerpt (4) another perspective of the sepoys is offered:

- (4) Next morning at day light *the Sepoys were asked* to give up their arms, but only about 100 came, first in the evening some more came, and the rest were driven out of the station. I think that was the longest day I ever remember. Were all very tired, and obliged to indoors because the a dust storm that came on, which nearly smothered us.

In excerpt (4) the semantic pattern collocates with a succession of active verbs (*give up, came, driven out, smothered*) and mental ones (*think, remember, obliged, tired*) which are linked to specific time references (*next morning, in the evening*) and spatial reference (*of the station*) that draws the reader's attention to a specific point of the situational context within the letter. Moreover, the use

of the person markers (*I, we*) and the impressionistic perspective on the event (*I think that was the longest day I ever remember*) in the narration increases personal involvement and identification between the encoder and the reader. The personal perspective of the representation is further underlined by the use of the coordinating conjunction *but* which links contrasting situations while referring to a succession of action recording sentences (*the Sepoys were asked to give up their arms, but only about 100 came, first in the evening some more came, and the rest were driven out of the station*) indicating the sepoys' resistance to be subdued, thus representing a danger for the English. The negative connotation of the whole context is further underscored by the representation of the harsh weather conditions the English had to face (*a dust storm came on, which nearly smothered us*) which, on the one hand, has a referential function and, on the other, has the purpose of generating deep concern in the readers due to the presence of the Other/enemy.

4.3 Our

Finally, the Concord programme of WST 7 was applied to the key possessive adjective *our* to access information about its collocations, the most frequent of which are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Concordance – Our

1	mutinies at Meerut and Delhi our regiment showed symptoms of
2	morning we were all roused out our beds and told to hasten to
3	told to hasten to Major Sleeman's as our regiment was going to mutiny
4	night outside, and we have guard at all our bungalows, and all is going
5	fearful times we live in! We cannot say our throats are safe from day to day

Our co-occurs most frequently with grammar words (*at, to, of,*), stative verbs (*have, be*), determiners (*all, some*), adjectives (*little, poor*) and nouns (*loss, house, position, men, party, servants, God, regiment, escape, force, officers*) that refer to private life as well as to the military aspects of the uprisings. This is reflected in the most frequent semantic pattern *our loss was + V* as in excerpt (5):

- (5) *Our loss was* estimated altogether about 120 killed and wounded. Thirteen guns were captured, and great loss inflicted on the enemy.

In excerpt (5) the narration is characterised by a succession of active verbs (*killed, wounded, captured, inflicted, suppressed*) linked to the activities in and

the outcome of the battles. The repeated factuality which is communicated in figures (*120 killed and wounded, thirteen guns*), while framed within space (Hyderabad) and time (18th July), provides not only authenticity to the communication but it also indicates the writer's grounded knowledge of military facts. The referential function of the information is also loaded by the writer's positive evaluation expressed by her satisfaction for the victory of the English over the sepoys (*thirteen guns were captured, great loss inflicted on the enemy*). By doing so, the writer points at her strong sense of belonging to the English/Us community that is represented as triumphant over the Sepoys, the enemy. The same attitude can be found in excerpt (6):

- (6) *Our loss was* six killed and twenty-five wounded. A rising took place in Hyderabad on 18th July, but was quickly suppressed.

The narration is once again characterised by a succession of active verbs (*killed, wounded, suppressed*) referring to battle activities but also to the overcoming of the sepoys/enemy/Other. As in excerpt (5), the information not only acquires authenticity by conveying precise figures (*six killed, twenty-five wounded*), temporal (*18th July*) and spatial (*Hyderabad*) indications but also by their linkage with particular personal experiences and meaning for the letter writers who, in this way, have a stronger persuasive impact on their readers. Moreover, the narration is typified by positive evaluation of the capacity of the English to always eventually win their enemy (A rising took place...*was quickly suppressed*) that is underscored by the use of the adverb *quickly*. By doing so, the writer demarcates her ground of belonging to the English/Us group while implying colonial hegemony and ethnic differences characterising colonialism (Samson 2020b) which the newspapers were strongly supporting at the time, as all the excerpts suggest.

5. Concluding remarks

The key lexical items *Delhi, sepoys* and *our* used by the women in WOPLEPIU reflect, firstly, the need to provide a geographical contextualisation of the uprisings taking place with the aim of creating and sharing an environment through which the reader can understand and imagine the events within a place. The latter, in fact, includes layers of intersecting meanings wherein time and space overlap with social relations. Secondly, the sepoys, in the women's view constantly represent the enemy, the Other to be subdued because they were challenging the English colonial rule. Thirdly, the

possessive adjective *our* refers to the English women and the wider English community, that is, the Us ruling group they belong to which, through their letters in the press, is extended from the periphery to the metropolis creating in this way a deep, horizontal national community (Anderson 1983).

The analysis of the recurring semantic sequences of the key lexical items, their collocates and concordances suggests they have more than a function. All the excerpts extracted from WOPLEPIU are characterised by detailed factual information. More specifically, the precise figures regarding the loss of English and European military forces, the sepoys, the names of the armaments used as well as the succession of active verbs referring to military actions indicate that the women letter writers possessed a good understanding of the military context and could therefore be considered credible and useful to disseminating colonial propaganda.

Furthermore, the negative discourses and evaluations expressed by the women in WOPLEPIU are recurrently about weapons, troops, a deficiency of military strategy and the lack of concern of the English government which foregrounds the propagandistic purpose of the letters. These have the purpose of making the public aware of the disastrous situation the English were experiencing in India as well as persuading it to call for proper military intervention in India to defend a sense of national collectivity and sameness through a common cause of existence.

The content of the letters further suggests that conflicts were not to be considered as exclusively a masculine domain but that the evaluations by what was considered the weak gender show an awareness of what was important and valuable to their persona as well as to the English community. In doing so, the information and the personal points of view expressed in the letters play a pivotal role in shaping the readers' perceptions, since they are linked to individual experiences as well as to social norms. They have, therefore, the purpose of generating shared emotional and rational reactions in the newspapers' readership and in the institutions while contributing to strong common national and instinctual responses to the attacks on the British identity, rule, and place.

Although WOPLEPIU is a small corpus which does not allow generalisations, the data nevertheless underscore the necessity to consider Victorian women from multi-faceted angles and to overcome their stereotyped portrayal by viewing them instead as active fire fanners well embedded in the colonial ideology and serving the propaganda of the time.

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The *bluestocking* in the Polish press (1830s-1890s): Othering women through code-switching, borrowing and loan translations¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies Polish² periodicals published in the nineteenth century with the aim of identifying representations of intellectual women. The following questions are addressed: 1) How were intellectual women evaluated? 2) What linguistic means were used and to what extent were code-switches, borrowings and loan translations sites of othering? 3) Which genres in the newspaper conglomerate featured such representations most frequently? The paper combines the frameworks of evaluation, sociopragmatics of code-switching, and discursive othering. This exploratory case-study focuses on the lexeme *bluestocking* 'educated, intellectual woman' and its French (*bas bleu*) and German counterparts (*Blaustrumpf*), and the Polish loan translations (*niebieska/błękitna pończocha/pończoszka*). The analysis shows that the terms entailed ambiguous evaluations, while the negative ones tended to be enhanced by foreignness effects of the loans from French, German, and English.

Keywords: intellectual women, nineteenth-century Polish press, othering, evaluation, code-switching, unadapted borrowings.

1. Introduction

Social divisions and inequalities materialise in news discourse. In the late modern period, the separation of the male-female spheres was seen as one of the most prominent, though also contested, social and cultural divisions

¹ I would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful remarks. The remaining errors are entirely mine.

² The terms Poland and Polish may be taken to designate political entities as well as the language, e.g. the Kingdom of Poland which was part of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1569-1795.

(Shevelov 1989; Bannet 2008). Research underlines that, while constructing normative and idealised femininities, the contemporary publishing markets and periodical press downplayed and obscured actual involvement of women in professional spheres, e.g. of book production (Grundy 2009: 146). Whereas women who engaged in print trade in different capacities have been subject to analysis (see Shapiro 2023 for an overview), learned and intellectual women thematised and represented in the press still have not received the attention they deserve. This paper studies Polish magazines and periodicals published in the nineteenth century with the aim of identifying representations of intellectual women. The following questions are addressed: 1) How were intellectual women evaluated in this linguistic and cultural circle? 2) What linguistic means were used to build the literary female personae and to what extent were code-switches, borrowings and loan translations sites of othering? 3) Which genres in the newspaper and magazine conglomerate featured such representations most frequently? The paper combines the frameworks of evaluation, sociopragmatics of written code-switching, and discursive othering.

This exploratory case-study focuses on the foreign lexeme, *bluestocking* ‘educated, intellectual woman’, its French (*bas bleu*) and German counterparts (*Blaustrumpf*), as well as the Polish loan translations (*niebieska/błękitna pończocha/pończoszka*). The analysis is divided into a qualitative presentation of the data (Section 4) followed by a quantitative study (Section 5). The lexeme drew my attention in the material on women’s issues in different types of nineteenth-century periodicals in Polish, including dailies and weeklies, specialised women’s magazines and literary journals. At this preliminary stage, I have also identified further terms that are semantically equivalent to the notion of a learned woman and that bear a lexical connection to the Bluestocking society. Data samples were then extracted through automated searches for these keywords in the databases of digitised newspapers (*Biblioteka Jagiellońska* and *CRISPA*). The paper shows that the terms entailed ambiguous evaluations, while the negative ones tended to be enhanced by foreignness effects of the unadapted or partially adapted loans from French, German, and English. Finally, the study indicates some directions for further research into the representations of women in late modern news discourse.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the sources of data against the background of the periodical market in Poland in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Section 3 provides background for the approach that combines discursive evaluation and representations of women with the notion of othering and the sociopragmatics of written code-

switching. Section 4 briefly outlines the cultural and social background of the term *bluestocking* and illustrates its transfer and reception in the Polish press through a preliminary qualitative analysis. This section not only indicates the positive and negative poles of the evaluation entailed in the keywords, but it also explains the rationale behind the selection of the keywords. Section 5 covers illustrations of othering that accompany the use of the unadapted or partially adapted borrowing *bluestocking* and the related keywords in the Polish news discourse. Section 6 offers a summary and some conclusions.

2. Periodical press in partitioned Poland: A brief sketch

The development of periodical press in Polish, in general, was somewhat belated compared to that in Britain and the rest of western Europe and Italy. A number of factors may be indicated to account for this. First of all, in the eighteenth century, the period of consolidation of the press market in Britain (Brownlees 2023), numerous military conflicts and internal destabilisation led to the political dissolution of the Kingdom of Poland. The first partition, i.e. territorial annexation of Polish lands, occurred in 1772. Two further partitions followed in 1793 and 1795, with the state disappearing into the Empires of Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary. Secondly, the urbanisation rate and economic indicators may be taken into account. For instance, in the 1830s, the so-called Russian Poland was still a rural economy, with the urbanisation rate under 10% and GDP per capita at c. 33% of that of Britain (Bukowski et al. 2019). Thirdly, literacy rates were much lower than in western Europe. Although this may be exaggerated and does not account for urban vs. rural or gender distinctions, it has been estimated that only c. 2-3% of the population were able to read the press in the 1790s (Łojek 1963: 26).

All in all, this environment did not create favourable conditions for the development of the press market or diversification and popularisation of newspapers and periodicals. For example, *Monitor Warszawski*, a government gazette launched in 1824 was published in 800 copies (Warsaw had c. 115,000 inhabitants then), but with only 200 subscriptions (Słomkowska 1968). Three decades earlier *The Times* was disseminated in 3,000 copies (Finkelstein 2023: 51; London's population exceeded one million). At the point of the most intense growth of periodical press during the November Uprising against the Russian government in 1830-31, as many as 49 titles were published in Warsaw (Łojek 1965: 14); 7 of these were dailies with 7,000 circulation

in total. The crushed uprising resulted in the freezing of the publishing market and repressions. In addition, there were considerable differences between the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Prussian territories in terms of legal regulations and censorship. Moreover, material issues, such as the advancement of printing and paper production technologies, affected the press markets differently. Moreover, partitioned Poland was multilingual and multicultural, which was also reflected in periodical publications (Kolasa 2015; e.g. Barełkowski 2021 on the German language press). Finally, in terms of the social reach of periodical press, given literacy restrictions mentioned above and the relatively high cost of newspapers, it is not likely that the readership was socially or economically representative of the contemporary society in partitioned Poland.

Moving on to specialised press for women, in Britain, women's participation in periodical cultures in general goes back to the early eighteenth century (Shevelow 1989). It was then that periodical press, in particular popular magazines such as e.g. the *Tatler*, put on a "mantle of a progressive orientation towards women" (Shevelow 1989: 4). This meant a reformist programme of opening educational and literary opportunities to an idealised female figure, the domestic woman, in order to make her an object of interest, as well as a reader and a writer. Whereas, as Shevelow continues, periodicals of this type became a written site of constructing norms for femininity at the time in Britain, parallel developments in Poland did not start until the 1770s with the publication of *Monitor* (1765-1785), one of the many European copycats of the English *Spectator* (1711-12). As I have noted elsewhere, it took even longer before specialised female titles appeared in the Polish lands (Włodarczyk 2025). Only as late as the nineteenth century did literacy advance considerably, as a result of which issues of female education were raised by periodical press and tendencies for emancipation were voiced (Głos – Matuszko 2021: 122). Research has thus indicated the 1860s, when, with the rise of a reformist movement, i.e. positivism (Stegmann 2000: 33-34), specialised magazines for female audience appeared (see also Franke 1999).

The databases utilised for the purpose of this study comprise archives of periodical and other printed material from the collections of the University libraries in Cracow and Warsaw. The *Jagiellonian Digital Library* and *CRISPA* cover specialised, literary and other thematic publications, as well as news sources, such as dailies, weeklies, magazines from 1660s to present day. Both have been created and expanded thanks to the financial support of the EU and are outcomes of intense and commendable, but not entirely transparent

or consistent digitisation efforts. As both repositories enable searches and filtering results from periodical publications, they are at present the most comprehensive online resources of primary material on historical news discourse in partitioned Poland. Understandably, as university libraries' collections, the data cover urban periodical market to a larger extent than provincial papers. However, research into subscription patterns shows that newspapers published in major cities circulated in the provincial areas as well (Łojek 1965). As far as keyword searches are concerned, since internal classifications are not fine-grained and the metadata systematics is not free from overlaps, reliable searches are best to be conducted on the entirety of the periodical sections, or within individual titles/ individual time spans. Overall, for the late modern period, the digital libraries provide a broad background on historical press in partitioned Poland and as a primary resource, they may be described as representative of its variety and time depth.

3. Evaluation, representations and othering of women

Brownlees (2025), who discusses male – female relations in letters to the editor in eighteenth-century British periodicals, concludes that representations of women are hardly ever neutral. Brownlees employs the framework of evaluation based on Thompson and Hunston (2000). Evaluation is thus viewed on discourse level beyond the lexicogrammatical features and may transpire in the form of graduation of intensity or force of an utterance (Brownlees 2025: 162; cf. Bednarek 2006: 29). This suggests that evaluation is not simply a sum of individual features, but a pragmatic phenomenon fostered by a text or an utterance as a whole. Indeed, the lexicogrammatical approach to evaluation entails certain limitations. For instance, more subtle forms of evaluation, implied rather than explicit assessments, remain unaccounted for. In this respect, approaches that take into account cognitive aspects of communication, such as the processing effort involved in message decoding, come in handy. In this paper, I would like to implement an approach that combines evaluation, the sociopragmatics of code-switching and discursive othering.

A previous paper (Włodarczyk 2025) analysed occupational and agentive terms for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century periodicals in partitioned Poland and qualitatively explored typographic features in representations of women employing the framework proposed by

Tyrkkö and Legutko (2023). Typographic marking of feminatives (italicisation, bolding, excessive punctuation) reveal “*otherness* that is observable in the visual mode” (Tyrkkö – Legutko 2023: 144; original italics) and, by extension, also attitudes toward women and social evaluations of the terms and potential referents. Interestingly, as the authors note, such marking of non-standard text in *Punch* has a humorous motivation and introduces playfulness related to linguistic creativity. In this paper, it is not typography, but foreignness effects of unadapted or partially adapted borrowings/code-switched items and, to some extent, also of loan translations, that is viewed as a form of othering in the framework of the social and visual impact of code-switching (Sebba 2011; Machan 2011).³ In other words, the use of such terms not only involves a markedness effect, with consequences for the processing effort, but becomes an ideal site for sensitising the audience to the social and cultural evaluations of their referents, with possible *otherness* effects.

These effects share some affinity with *othering*, a keyword in present-day media studies:

Othering is a strategy that reinforces the mainstream by differentiating individuals and groups and relegating them to the margins according to a range of socially constructed categories. Othering occurs via a wide range of practices from language differentiation to geographical assignation, native/nonnative status (despite legal citizenship), and photographic and filmic techniques that foreground and center some characters while backgrounding and obscuring others (Gray – Ouellette 2017: 133).

The notion of “Other” and the processes of othering have been voiced profoundly in Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk 1998, 2000; Reisigl – Wodak 2001). The self-other or we-they polarisation of attitudes in discourse are relatively common-sense notions with cognitive underpinnings (van Dijk 1998: 25). Expanding on this dichotomy, Reisigl – Wodak (2001) developed an approach within CDA which has been used to study discursive constructions of identities, based on the assumption of positive self and negative other presentation also in historical press (Bös 2024a).

Recently, the notion of othering has been employed in the analysis of online media (Vaahensalo 2021) to frame dominance vs. marginalisation in

³ Typographic marking very often accompanies the keywords analysed here. Thus, the broader framework employed by Tyrkkö – Legutko (2023), i.e. Jaffe’s (2000) orthographic aesthetics is potentially relevant here as well.

the ethnic and cultural domains. Undoubtedly, women have been seen as the controlled and inferior “other” relative to men historically (De Beauvoir 1997 [1949]). Interestingly, it has been shown that in anonymous online discussions, both maleness and whiteness are still the supported norms (Phillips 2019). Vaahensalo describes online othering discourse as social, intersectional, and discursively diverse (Vaahensalo 2021: 223-236). More precisely, the phenomenon of othering entails specific attributes: public visibility and polarising dichotomies. These and some more of its attributes, interestingly, are also observable in the ways that historical media represented women (see Sections 4 and 5 below). Thus, in contemporary media, othering discourse uses arguments about humanity in general, targets groups rather than individuals, entails intersections of a broad array of identities that are marginalised on different grounds, does not necessarily entail overt hostility or racist terminology but employs humour and even impartial terms. Finally, othering may serve the purpose of resistance and subversion (e.g. against cis people).

Othering thus involves discursive phenomena such as backgrounding, marginalisation, trivialisation and discrimination in representing individuals and groups. That such polarising discursive constructions have been universally present not only in the media, but in human communication in general cannot be denied. Whereas issues of dominance and marginalisation have been studied in historical press, depositions and letters within the framework of CDA in reference to women in different periods (Prentice – Hardie 2009; Bös 2024b; MacLeod – Fennel 2012; Wood 2009), the term othering has, to my knowledge, so far not been employed.

This study connects polarisation of group identities and individuals commonly identified through CDA to the use of code-switching, unadapted and partially adapted borrowings/code-switches and loan translations as lexical means which underline the foreignness of a target reference (the *otherness* as defined by Tyrkkö – Legutko 2023: 144). In written texts, visual cues may emphasise this effect prompting the audience to take notice of social and cultural values of the referents relative to the mainstream ones (e.g. patriarchy and male dominance). An important component of othering, as understood here, is that it does not essentially entail overt hostility or discriminating terminology, but it may employ humour and unbiased terms (as noted both by Tyrkkö – Legutko 2023 and Vaahensalo 2021). It is the ambivalence and, paradoxically, through the markedness of the non-native material, a note of playfulness in relation to linguistic creativity and novelty, that othering may add to the evaluations entailed

in the representations of non-mainstream groups beyond unambiguously negative attitudes.

Research into periodicals in Britain has shown that throughout the eighteenth century they drew a specific image of women that often undermined their intellectual capacities and restricted their needs to the domestic sphere (Shevelov 1989: 33-37; Batchelor – Powell 2018: 6, 10). Since learned women in particular failed to live up to the normative constructions of femininity, it may be assumed that this group, not just women in general, have been a target of discursive othering as defined above. More specifically, in this study, one of the effects of discursive othering is reinforcement of male dominance, as well as of the femininity models engendered by and in order to meet the needs of the social and cultural mainstream non-female mainstream. In Section 4 below I explain why representations of femininity constructed in relation to the Bluestockings, an intellectual circle dominated by women which came to be known internationally, provide a fascinating case for the frameworks outlined above.

4. How the Bluestockings travelled to Poland: Definitions, lexical transfer and contemporary metacomments

The Bluestocking Society has become emblematic for informal social and intellectual groups in the eighteenth century who have played an important role in contesting sex divisions in access to education and learning (Myers 1990; Eger 2013; Sairio 2009; Heller 2015; Pohl 2018). Vast literature on the Society exists that cannot be reviewed here in greater detail for reasons of space. Instead, the semantics of the term bluestocking in English and its echoes in the early usage in the Polish press are discussed below.

At present in historical and literary studies, the English term denotes learned women. The meaning was fostered in the original social circle in the 1750s and was used positively (Pohl 2018: 445 [fn. 8]; Sairio 2009: 95). Originally, woollen blue stockings (and other pieces of garment in blue) were associated with working-class men.⁴ In the 1770s, the term started to be used in reference to women, and a derogatory sense developed (Myers

⁴ The earlier English meaning of the term *blue stocking* (OED, adj. meaning 1, a1683 related to the Bluestocking Parliament) is reflected in 1812 in a political report on the English parliament in the title of a play: *The Blue Stocking or the Memebre Parliamentary, Błękitne Pończochy, czyli Członek Parlamentu*. (1812, *Gazeta Korrespondenta Warszawskiego y Zagranicznego*, No. 23).

1990: 6, 9-10). As Myers (1990: 244) further claims, after 1775, the reference narrowed down to women, in particular those active in literary, intellectual, and public life. This meaning became dominant over time, because it was women and their new roles that were intensely commented on in the contemporary press.

One of the first explanations of the term for a Polish audience in the sense generated around the famous Society is found in the travel accounts by Krystyn Lach-Szyrma from the 1820s (Podhajecka 2013: 144, f. 6).⁵ Interestingly, the term is used by the traveller in the Scottish context when he praises the knowledge of languages and education of Scottish women contrasting their active use of French with passive knowledge among the English ladies (Lach-Szyrma 1820-24, Vol. 3: 233):

- (1) Język francuzki znają prawie wszystkie, i więcej nim mówią niż Angielki lecz pospolicie przestają na rozumieniu go; Swoję literaturę znają doskonale: uczą się wiele wierszy, niektóre je piszą. Kobiety literatki nazywane są *blue stockings*⁶ (niebieskie pończochy) [...].

[Nearly all of them know the French language and speak it more than the English ladies, who commonly restrict themselves to understanding it. They know their literature perfectly well: they learn many poems by heart, some write poetry. Literary women are named *blue stockings* (niebieskie pończochy) [...].

In the Polish press, the English origins of the term were acknowledged and a variety of “definitions” of bluestockings may be found in the form of metacommentary. For instance, in 1836 the word was described as “a mocking name for learned women”,⁷ while in 1837 the referents were described as a sect.⁸ An extended explanatory piece going back to Elizabeth Montague and Benjamin Stillingfleet (see Sairio 2009: 95) titled *Bas bleu – niebieska pończocha* published in 1885⁹ corrects the mistaken view (which must have had some currency) that the term originated in France. Some explanatory accounts

⁵ I was not able to trace the reference to the page provided by Podhajecka (2013: 144 [fn. 6]), which may be due to different pagination and volume division in different editions.

⁶ All typographic emphasis is original, unless indicated otherwise.

⁷ “niebieskie pończochy są szydrczem nazwiskiem uczonych kobiet w Anglii” [blue stockings are a mocking name for learned women in England] (1836, *Korrespondent*, No. 148).

⁸ “Niebieskie pończochy nazywano sektę jednę w Anglii” [A sect in England was called blue stockings] (1837, *Zbiórca Literacki i Polityczny* [V.3], No. 15, 9 June 1837).

⁹ 1885, *Słowo*. Year 4, No. 77.

were not less detailed, but less accurate. For instance, it was claimed that Benjamin Stillingfleet was a poet and soul of the Club “of **men** and women” (emphasis MW). The term blue stocking, as was further explained, came from Stillingfleet’s worsted stockings (this was true), but was later extended to “female members” and “to this day, has meant pretentious savants”.¹⁰ On the other hand, female writers emphasised the original lack of derogation of the expression:

- (2) (*) znaczenie wyrazu *bas bleu*, jakie mu później nadano, chwytając się byle pretekstu w celu ośmieszania uczonych kobiet nie było pierwotnie żadną ironiczną przenośnią. Jak również i *virago* nie oznaczało u Rzymian pogardliwej lecz bezzaszczytną nazwę.¹¹

[The meaning of the word *bas bleu* that was later attached to it with a feeble excuse to ridicule learned women was initially not an ironic metaphor. Similarly, among the Romans, *virago* was not disparaging, but a neutral name.]

Having gained some insight from the contemporary meta-comments, I would like to move on to examples of usage which illustrate the potential of the term to include social commentary on women. I would like to start with an unusual example drawn from an editorial piece titled “In a saloon of the great world” (example 3 below). Its special value lies in the fact that the bluestocking persona is found in her original environment, in a Paris saloon. She is presented through the eyes of a social novice who sees her as a curious creature: “not a lady! A bluestocking”. The observer describes her as “merciless” as she forces guests to listen to her “treatise on female independence” bellowed with a “little voice”. While “conversing” with a circle of ridiculously dressed and unfashionably combed “swarm of heart print vests with and *kwafiur a la capout*”, she shouts and bites her lips. On spotting the novice trying to sneak away to the dancers in the next room, she complains loudly about the disappearance of conversation from the saloons and sarcastically praises him for refusing to play the role of a “Cariatide”. In return, she gets a sharp but polite retort:

¹⁰ “a następnie określenie to zostało dla żeńskich członków klubu i do dnia dzisiejszego oznacza pretensjonalne sawantki” [next the term was limited to female members and to this day, has meant pretentious savants] (1887, *Gazeta Polska*, No. 189). The Polish term *sawantka* is a feminine denoting female referents only.

¹¹ *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści: z dodatkiem ilustrowanym ubrań i robót kobiecych* 1877, No. 49 (8 Dec). <https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/publication/490697/edition/465033>. Drawn from a review of Edward Reich’s book written by a woman.

- (3) [...] zwrócił się bez ogródki do pończochy i kłaniając się, rzekł: Pani! jestem zupełnie jej zdania, gust i dowcip rozstają się z naszymi salonami, na naszych wieczorach już nie rozmawiają tylko się pozują i dla tego też to widzimy w salonach *nieme* karjatydy, ale co smutniejsza, że tam widzimy także kariatydy, które mówią. To rzekłszy, skłonił się unizienie i odszedł. (1869, *Kraj*, No. 222, 25 November).

[...] he turned bluntly to the *stocking*, bowed, and said: Lady! I totally agree with you, good taste and wit are scarce in our salons, in our evenings people no longer converse but strike a pose. Therefore, not only do we see *dumb* caryatides, but also, even more sadly, we also see caryatides who can speak. That said, he bowed respectfully and left her.]

In this multidimensional, but unambiguously negative representation of a bluestocking woman in her social environment, the Polish term *niebieska pończocha* ‘blue stocking’, as well as its shortened form: *pończocha* ‘stocking’ are used. In 1869, the Polish audience has already had the referential meaning of the Bluestocking Club member¹² at their disposal as some meta-commentary presented above shows. However, the metonymy by which a piece of clothing is used to represent a person is improved here, as it is used twice to refer to the company in which the “blue stocking” is located (“a swarm of heart-print vests”). Although salon sociality is taken with a pinch of salt here, the vivid, almost visual image of an insect-like collective is as unfitting as can be to the occasion. Not only does the lady embody lack of taste or wit, she is also overwhelming and unmannered. The latter vice contrasts with impeccable and ostensibly respectful conduct of the novice. The bluestocking persona is defeminised and downgraded socially (she is not a lady, she is ostentatious and boorish), she moralises others in a pitiful way, her pseudo-intellectual remark (on the motif of caryatide) is easy to turn against her. Most importantly, she is a pose of a person, there is nothing genuine about her. The young male and honest novice teaches her a lesson and in a great poised style.

This humorous piece of editorial news reflects sentiments similar to seriously-minded commentary on the inadequacy of women compared to men quoted below (example 4). The literary scene is the subject here in

¹² It is not a *bluestocking woman* that the Polish loan translation reflects, it is literally a *blue stocking*, a piece of garment, in particular when in the singular number. Some items comment on the persona wearing or not wearing the blue stockings, suggesting that the literal meaning of the attribute was still prominent and underlined the bodily as opposed to the intellectual and spiritual aspect of the original metaphor.

a sample translation of a preface to “Kleine Menschen” by Sarah Hutzler, which has just been published in Berlin. The preface was written by Dr. Max Nordau,¹³ “a new adversary of women” from Paris. The sample titled *Kobiety-literatki* [Literary women] is preceded by a remark that the editors quote the author of the preface verbatim, neither contradicting nor accepting the views presented. In short, the preface states that women are responsible for the declining standards in literary production, for which a range of arguments specific to the art of writing are collected. However, all this is due to vices intrinsic in femininity as such:

- (4) Zwykła *robota kobieca* (Blaustrumpf-Arbeit) ma pewne wspólne wady, które widoczne źródło swe mają W właściwości przeciętnej natury kobiecej, jest nieprawdziwą niesamodzielną, bez czucia. (1886, *Kuryer Codzienny*, Year 22, No. 244.)

[The common *female work* (Blaustrumpf-Arbeit) has some vices in common originating visibly in the mediocrity of female nature, which is ingenuous, nonautonomous, and unfeeling.]

The term *Blaustrumpf-Arbeit*, used in Polish as a partially adapted borrowing, has several facets to it. First of all, the allusion to the bluestocking figure is undeniable there, given the context (England being mentioned as one of the first countries where the role of literary women was detrimental to literature). However, in German the term *Blaustrumpf* has a separate semantic history: it was originally an offensive term to describe a male traitor.¹⁴ In the eighteenth century, the bluestocking meaning denoting the English salons was added. Nordau, who seems to have coined the term *Blaustrumpf-Arbeit*, appears to exploit the connection of women’s intellectual and literary contributions to the strongly derogatory meaning that the original German designation entails.

What the two examples, (3) and (4), have in common is that they create strongly unfavourable representations of women in the social and literary domains. Still, they illustrate two poles of the use of the term. In the first instance, the original salon character is depicted in detail; the reference is directly connected to the (superficially) intellectual though pretentious bluestocking. It evokes the original intellectual circle, but underlines that its

¹³ Max Nordau (1849-1923), a medical doctor, author and social critic was in a relationship with Sarah Hutzler (1853-1893), a German-American writer, between 1881-82/3 (Zudrell 2003: 135, f 558).

¹⁴ See <https://www.zdl.org/wb/wortgeschichten/Blaustrumpf>.

ideals are failing over a century later. In the second one, the original German term glosses the Polish translation, with no need for an explanation or recourse to the source reference to evoke the persona. The term thus denotes a more general meaning which does not require a close contextualisation to be transparent.

As further examples show, by the 1880s *Blaustrumpf* functioned as a grammatically adapted borrowing, alongside the English and French equivalents (*bas bleu*), and the Polish loan translations (*niebieska/błękitna pończocha*). These terms are related semantically as well as intertextually, as they all bear a link to the Bluestocking society. Moreover, the terms are relevant to the framework adopted here (see Section 3 above), as they evoke a foreignness effect that sensitises the audience to the expression of evaluation. Based on thorough readings of samples on themes of female education and professional opportunities, I have not identified any further terms connected to the lexeme *bluestocking* that were used to describe intellectual women. Hence these terms, as listed below, are subject to further analysis below (Section 5, Table 1).

5. Women through unadapted loanwords and loan translations: An analysis

5.1 Language contact terms and illustrations

Prior to quantitative analysis, a brief presentation of the terms and concepts in the realm of language contact is due. Some studies have attempted to draw lines of distinction between mixing, code-switching and have in particular distinguished between code-switching and borrowing (Myers-Scotton 1992). Recent research shows that some delimitations require a revision when faced with historical evidence where clear-cut distinctions between, e.g., code-switching and borrowing are even more difficult to draw (Schendl – Wright 2011). However, even researchers who acknowledge that “[t]he use of overt material from two languages unites CS and lexical borrowing” (Backus – Dorleijn 2009: 78) decide to keep the three categories, i.e. code-switching, lexical borrowings and loan translation, apart. In particular, the latter stands out, as it does not include foreign material, but its native equivalents. In this paper, I follow the distinctions drawn by Backus and Dorleijn (2009: 76-77):

loanword/lexical borrowing: “words from a lending language become entrenched as conventional words in the receiving lexicon”; e.g. Polish

is a language with overt case marking on the noun through inflectional endings, so here belong forms such as *bluestocking-ów*, *Blaustrumpf-ów* (Genitive Plural); *Blaustrumpf-u* (Genitive Singular)

loan translation: “any usage of morphemes in Language A that is the result of the literal translation of one or more elements in a semantically equivalent expression in Language B”; e.g. Pl. *niebieska pończocha* [blue stocking]

code-switching: “use of overt material (from single morphemes to entire sentences) from Language B in Language A discourse.”, e.g. in Pl. “do tego najnieprzyjemniejszego z potworów, *that most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue stocking*, kobiety-literatki.”, “Niedouczenie czyni kobiety nieukami lub ‘bas-bleus’”

Nevertheless, complex cases also occur, where, due to the (potential) zero-marking on the noun in some grammatical cases, an inflectional ending may not be realised overtly, so it is impossible to exclude marking for case. In addition, if adjective agreement is present “sławnej *bluestocking* angielskiej” (example 5 below), then indeed the governing noun is the source of case assignment. Such instances may be described as partially adapted borrowings, as the foreign lexeme is inserted into the morphosyntactic matrix of Polish in the noun phrase. In other cases, however, “kobiety ... *bas bleu*” (example 6), the item under scrutiny is an extension of the subject and syntactically follows the predicate with the Polish noun *kobiety*. In this case, *bas bleu* is either an unadapted loanword or a code-switched item, showing a close affinity between the two categories, in particular in the case of single non-native lexemes.

5.2 Evaluation and othering: Quantification and analysis

Having conducted keyword searches in two online historical press collections, I analyse the samples with respect to the evaluation of the persona represented through them. Although, ambiguity is intrinsic in many terms, I make an attempt to classify the evaluations as positive, neutral, and negative (Research question 1). Taking foreignness effects further, a question arises as to similar results attached to the use of loan translations. Although loan translations do not generate code-switching, they are new additions to the lexicon, and especially if they come in the form of multiword units, it is not unlikely that they require more processing effort than unadapted

and partially adapted borrowings. Moreover, a distinction is drawn between unadapted borrowings, partially adapted borrowings and loan translation (Research question 2). Following from this, the analysis traces the differences in the evaluations expressed via code-switches and borrowings as opposed to loan translations. In addition, I trace the news discourse formats¹⁵ in which the keywords appear (Research question 3). Table 3 presents the distribution of search terms over time.

Keyword searches (listed in Table 1) in the electronic databases yielded 66 occurrences published between 1837 and 1897. In some cases, more than one type of keyword was used (Table 1, term category: mixed, with 5 occurrences). Sometimes, a keyword was repeated within a clause or sentence, which is not reflected in the counts.

Table 1. Raw occurrences of terms referring to the Bluestocking woman

Term	unadapted	(partially) adapted	loan translation	No. (raw)	%
niebieska/błękitna pończocha/pończoszka P.			+	21	32%
Blaustrumpf (Ger.)	+	+		3	4%
bas-bleu, bas-bleaux, bas bleus (Fr.)	+			32	48%
bluestocking; a bluestocking, Blue Stocking (Eng.)	+	+		5	8%
mixed	+	+	+	5	8%
total count				66	100%

The most frequent keyword was French *bas bleu* with 32 occurrences (48%), followed by the loan translation in Polish with 21 items (32%). The English term occurred 5 times (8%) and the German one 3 times (4%). Dailies published in Warsaw (except for *Czas* which appeared in Cracov) were the main source: 39 items (60%) come from 5 publications (*Czas* – 16, *Kurjer Warszawski* 11, *Gazeta Codzienna*, *Słowo* and *Gazeta Polska* 4 items each). Only one fourth of the samples (16 items; 24%) occurred before the 1860s. The three decades that follow cover roughly similar numbers of samples each (15 items for 1860s,

¹⁵ Contemporary news discourse formats that occur in the data comprise: editorial material, reviews of books and plays, and novels in instalments (originally Polish as well as translations), reports of events, speeches, letters, and clearly indicated external sources, i.e. material adapted from a foreign publication.

12 for 1870s, and 17 for 1880s), together accounting for nearly 70% of the material. Only six cases (c. 10%) were published in the 1890s. As for the genres, the majority of occurrences were drawn from editorial material (30 cases; i.e., 45%), reviews of books and plays (17, i.e. 26%) and novels in instalments, both Polish and translated (12; i.e. 18%). The remaining occurrences come from two reports, a speech, a letter, and an external source (material adapted from a foreign newspaper).

As far as the referents are concerned, indeed the majority of cases refer to a person, but 6 cases involve artefacts such as a piece of garment (the stockings in blue, some with potentially metonymic readings), a book and a newspaper title. The most frequent persona is a literary woman (28 items; 42%) and a learned woman (12 items; 18%). Much less frequently further female types are evoked: spinsters/older women (4 items; 6%), wives and emancipated women (3 items; 4.5%), as well as a specific literary figure (e.g. Sapho), a high society lady, political women and, in one case, women in general. Four instances remain obscure in terms of their referents (6%). Bearing in mind the collective meaning of the *Bluestocking* reference, it is important to note that only 35 items (53%) were grammatically singular or indicated an individual referent. As far as the distribution over time is concerned (Table 2), the 1830s and the 1890s have the lowest numbers of occurrences (1 and 6 respectively). For the 1840s and 1850s, 7 and 8 occurrences were identified. The three decades 1860s-1880s account for over 50% of all occurrences (34 instances).

In terms of evaluation, five categories were applied in order to capture the scalar nature of some, especially neutral judgements (Table 3). This and other aspects of evaluation are illustrated and discussed below (Section 5.2). Only 17% of cases (11 items) may be seen as involving positive or mildly

Table 2. Search terms over time

Decade	No.	%
1830s	1	1%
1840s	7	11%
1850s	8	12%
1860s	15	23%
1870s	12	18%
1880s	17	26%
1890s	6	9%
Total	66	100%

Table 3. Evaluation categories and counts

Evaluation category	No.	%
negative	42	64%
neutral to negative	9	13%
neutral	4	6%
neutral to positive	4	6%
positive	7	11%
total count	66	100%

positive judgments, as opposed to 77% of negative or mildly negative ones (51 items). This shows that the transfer of the pejorative meaning that was prevalent in the early nineteenth century when the terms were first adopted in Polish news discourse.

As indicated above, the positive evaluation scored the lowest, with seven examples. It is important to underline that even a positive reading has always been relative to the default negative referential meaning that characterised the English usage in the nineteenth century (see Section 4 above) when the designation was transferred into Polish (see f7 and the relevant metacomment above):

- (5) Szczególną zwrócili uwagę listy z czasów jego młodości o nim pisane, H. More, sławnej *blue-stocking* angielskiej i artykuł Thackeray'a z godłem *Nil nisi bonum*. (1860, *Gazeta Codzienna*, No. 67)

[Particular attention was paid to the letters from his youth by H. More, a famous English *blue-stocking*, and an article by Thackeray with the emblem *Nil nisi bonum*.]

In this quote (example 5), drawn from an editorial piece devoted to the memory of an English writer on the occasion of his death, the adjective “famous” suggests a positive reference, while the pairing of the name of the English poet Hannah More (1745-1833) with a mention of William Thackeray adds to the affirmative picture of the *bluestocking* here. It should be added that the *blue-stocking* is clearly indicated here as female through grammatical gender agreement between the adjective *English* and the semantic gender of the noun *blue-stocking* (sławnej_{FEM} *blue-stocking* angielskiej_{FEM}).

- (6) są, wreszcie złośliwi mężczyźni, co podatek na kobiety piszące książki *bas bleus* proponują. (1861, *Magazyn Mód i Nowości Dotyczących Gospodarstwa Domowego*, Year 50, No. 283)

[there are also spiteful men who suggest a tax on women writing books (*bas bleus*).]

Example (6) above closes a longer editorial titled “Correspondence from Paris”. Women writers are juxtaposed here with “spiteful men”, who have bad intentions, and appear under threat. Although no overtly positive lexis is used, this fragile position, alongside the emphasis on female agency and literary activity in the use of the present participle (women writing books rather than e.g. women writers) render this reference positive.

- (7) Bratowa, *bas bleu*, była gospodynią jego domu, nie zawadzającą mu i umiejącą się do jego trybu życia i obyczaju zastosować. Literatura nie była mu obcą, a uczyoność bratowej nie dała mu jej zaniedbać. (1882, *Kurjer Warszawski*, Year 62, No. 225)

[His sister in law, *bas bleu*, was hostess of his house, did not bother him, and was able to adjust to his lifestyle and habit. He was no stranger to literature, while her lore did not allow him to neglect it.]

Example (7) places a learned woman in a clearly feminine social role, one significant to, but subordinate in a male-dominated world. However, in the intellectual realm, the *bas bleu* appears to be in charge and exerts a positive influence on the male protagonist (a novel by the famous contemporary writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski 1812-1887).

In two further cases categorised as positive, a loan translation followed by the French code-switched and a reference to a specific public literary figure similar to the example with the English poet Hannah More is denoted. The two remaining positive evaluations in (8) and (9) contrast with strongly negative statements and serve the purpose of contradicting them. This suggests that the negative reading of the terms (unadapted or partially adapted borrowings) was the default one (only one of the positives includes the loan translation).

As far as the examples classified as neutral to positive (occurring four times), a similar strategy of contrast is observed. Interestingly, in three cases, the emotion of fear or potential threat is evoked and dismissed through a joke or an authoritative quote or reference:

- (8) Straszą was niekiedy nazwiskiem niebieskiej pończochy (*bas bleu*). Z tego powodu przytoczę przedziwny dowcip pewnej matrony, która powiedziała: 'Nie umiem dostrzedz niebieskiej pończochy, kiedy suknia jest długa.' (1864, *Czas*, Year 18, No. 20)

[They will sometimes threaten you with the name blue stocking (*bas bleu*). For this reason, I will quote the oddest joke of a certain matron, who said: 'I cannot see a blue stocking if a long dress covers it.']

- (9) Gorące i szumne pochwały oddawane przez p. de Tocqueville kobietom Amerykańskim – będą, jak sądzę dostatecznym uspokojeniem dla tych, którzy się lękają by rozwój wolności wiedzy i władzy nie wyroził tego groźnego potwora, znanego pod nazwą: sawantek (*bas bleu*). (1872, *Opiekun Domowy*, Year 8, Series 3, No. 13)

[Heated and loud praise of American women by Mr de Tocqueville, will, I think be sufficient reassurance to those who fear lest the development of free knowledge and power fosters this threatening monster, known under the name of savants (*bas bleu*).]

Only three samples involved neutral references. In the following example (10), the possessive pronoun used as a modifier indicates an indifferent or mildly supportive position on the fate of the group. Nevertheless, the context for the quote is a longer humouristic review of recent publications which voices mild criticism of the female periodical *Magazyn Mód* [Fashion Magazine] which “dziś bowiem służy on tylko do obwinięcia żurnali – bo nawet mód nie opisze zrozumiale” [today is only used as cover to other journals – as it even fails to provide clear fashion descriptions]. Thus the example is ambiguous: given the meaning of the word organ as both an institutional representation (in this case, a new periodical for the group) as well as of a bodily organ.¹⁶

The other examples involved the loan translation in the phrase “wear the blue-stockings”.

- (10) Powinny nasze *bas bleus* zjednoczyć się i stworzyć nowy organ dla swojej płci. (1857, *Czas. The Monthly Supplement*, Year 2, Vol. 7, No. 19)

[Our *bas bleu* should unite and create a new organ for their sex.]

A larger set of examples (illustrated in 11 and 12), i.e. nine, were categorised between neutral to negative.

- (11) to nieszczęsne *bas bleu* kwestji kobiecej? (1869, *Kurjer Warszawski*, Year 49, No. 106)

[The unfortunate *bas bleu* of the woman’s issue?]

- (12) są znowu uczone bardzo panie, albo z rodzaju *bas bleu*, albo też artystki (1868, *Gazeta Narodowa*, No. 257)

[there are also very learned ladies, or of the *bas bleu* kind, or artists]

¹⁶ I am grateful to a reviewer for this suggestion. If this metaphor is pursued, a misogynistic reading is also possible, suggesting that intellectual women should in fact “grow an organ on their bodies in order to become men” (Reviewer 1). However, the first clause recommends that *bas bleus* should unite as a group, which prompts the reading of organ as a political allusion (people spontaneously coming together and creating a representation for themselves in the form of a written manifesto or a regular publication). Moreover, the process of growing a sexual organ is in a sense precluded because “a new organ” is singular, while *bas bleus* are a collective.

Although negativity transpires through the examples (9) and (10), they involve understatements and no explicit pejoration and were thus differentiated from negative references.

The largest evaluation category, the occurrences categorised as negative and negative to neutral account for 77% of the analysed items. Therefore, this type cannot be presented as thoroughly as the few positive and neutral items. Only selected quotations are given in full and are fully referenced, while the majority are brought together under specific linguistic features that they have in common in order to achieve clarity of presentation.

The quotation below (13) illustrates a negative evaluation:

- (13) Niebieska pończoszka, ów *Blaustrumpf* dziewiętnastego wieku, to najhaniebniejszy wymysł nowszych czasów, to dziwactwo próżniaczego plemienia (1871, *Kraj*, No. 294)

[The little blue stocking, this *Blaustrumpf* of the nineteenth century is the most disgraceful figment of modern times, it is an oddity of the idle tribe"]

Not only is the statement full of spite, but it also involves a generalisation about humanity in the modern era, introduces a differentiation that marginalises the targeted group, as it acknowledges its public visibility. Thus, othering is achieved here through language features such as: the use of diminutive in the loan translation (“pończoszka” [little stocking]), the modification of the unadapted loan with “ów” (a formal animate pronoun “this”), the use of the superlative adjective, and the terms “figment” and “oddity” expressing the dehumanised and bizarre ideas involved in the personae denoted by the mixed use of the loan translation and the borrowing from German. Interestingly, the modification with the definite pronoun indicates that the grammatical gender of *Blaustrumpf* is masculine, as consonant-final stems are generally masculine in Polish. Morphological adaptation is reflected here through agreement with the modifier in the noun phrase rather than in an inflectional ending on the lexeme itself. In this way, an additional shade of disapproval is achieved: the semantically female persona is stripped of femininity.

Below in examples (14) to (17), I have listed a number of similar features, which I underlined in the original and in the English translation.

- (14) tego najnieprzyjemniejszego z potworów, *that most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue stocking*, kobiety-literatki. (1885, *Czas*, Year 38, No. 223)

[that most disagreeable of all monsters, *that most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue stocking*, a literary woman.]

- (15) niemałe falangi uczonych *blue stocking* Europy. (1880, *Gazeta Polska*, No. 172)

[quite considerable phalanx of scholars the *blue stockings* of Europe.]

- (16) a unikać nawet cienia śmieszności owych *bas-bleus*. (1887, *Gazeta Narodowa*, No. 87)

[and avoid even the slightest hint of ridicule of these *bas-bleus*.]

- (17) Niedouczenie czyni kobiety nieukami lub ‘*bas-bleus*’. (1896, *Dziennik Krakowski*, No. 28)

[Ignorance makes women ignorant or ‘*bas-bleus*’]

Besides strongly negative superlative adjectives, dehumanising lexis and distal pronominal modification (“most disagreeable”, “monster”, “that” (in 14), “ridicule” in (16); “ignorance” in (17)), the persona in question is presented sarcastically through a collective noun (“phalanx”) and a generalisation to the level of a European phenomenon (15). As such, the *bluestocking* is to be avoided (example 16).

Furthermore, negative adjectives denoting more than mature age or other appalling abstract or physical qualities were employed: “podstarzała niebieska pończocha” [an elderly blue stocking], “obrzydliwe niebieskie pończochy” [disgusting blue stockings], “*bas bleu* – rozczochrane zawsze włosy” [*bas bleu* – always disheveled hair]. Modification by amplifiers such as “truly”, “completely” and “plenty”: “kompletny bluestocking” [a complete_{MASC} bluestocking], “była prawdziwie *bas bleu*” [she was truly *bas bleu*]; “mnóstwo blaustrumpfów” [plenty of blaustrumpfs_{MASC}] is also common. Due to requirements on phrasal agreement in Polish, the code-switched/borrowed items ending in a consonant, i.e. the English and German terms, also involved defeminisation similar to that presented in example (13) above. The French item and the loan translation failed to produce this effect. However, the bluestocking persona was very much associated with wiping out or destroying its own gender qualities also when the loan translation was employed:

- (18) Nasze owszem niebieskie pończochy od dawna już główną dla siebie chlubę upatrywać zwykły w męzkości. (1856, *Gazeta Codzienna*, No. 243)

[Our indeed blue stockings have long seen their main pride in masculinity.]

Moreover, the use of collective nouns for typification (like in example 15) and indefinite pronouns or other modifiers for distancing purposes occurs commonly: “Zastęp ten niebieskich pończoch” [this troop of blue stockings]; “pewna para niebieskich pończoch z Warszawy” [a certain pair of blue stockings from Warsaw], “parę *bas bleus*, parę zapalczywych zwolenniczek, czy też przeciwnych emancypacji kobiet” [a number of *bas bleu*, a couple of zealous supporters or opponents of women’s emancipation]. Typification and groupings were underlined by the use of specific modifiers: “rodzaj tak zwanego *bas bleu*” [the kind of the so-called *bas bleu*], “klasa niebieskich pończoch” [the class of blue stockings], “typ *Blaustrumpf*” [the *Blaustrumpf*_{MASC} type], “Jakaś młoda niebieska pończocha” [some young blue stocking]. Differentiation of individuals and groups was also achieved by means of enumeration or juxtaposition: “na mężatce, wdowie, panience i jakiejś *bas bleu*” [on the married woman, the widow, the maiden girl and some *bas bleu*], “nasze piękne dewotki i poważne *bas-bleu*” [our beautiful zealots and serious *bas-bleu*]. It is important to note pluralisation (examples 14 to 18).

5.3 Discussion of results

The analysis presented above has shown that the equivalents of the English term *bluestocking* were most frequently used to denote female writers and learned women (60% of the cases), with some typified personae such as spinsters, older women, wives and emancipators embodied much less frequently. Some samples involved a great complexity of representation and would require extensive qualitative analyses to give justice to the ambivalence of the social and cultural meanings entailed in them (see examples (3) and (5) above). However, not the ambiguity, but negativity appears to dominate the sample, with neutral and positive attitudes showing only as exceptions.

One of the objectives of the analysis was to see to what extent female representations can be viewed as sites of othering, as defined in Section 2. First of all, despite the overwhelmingly negative evaluation expressed through the keywords analysed above, some positive, neutral to positive, and neutral attitudes were also conveyed through them. The personae generated through the majority of examples have been subject to a variety of forms of othering, such as typification, overgeneralisation, marginalisation, dehumanisation, masculinisation, and the use of polarising dichotomies. Although the code-switched items and the loan translations played an important part here, othering effects frequently resulted from a conglomerate of features of lexicon and collocational effects, such as the

use of pluralisation, diminutives and modifiers (e.g. indefiniteness and distance). Defeminisation and masculinisation, however, was achieved mainly through the use of borrowings from German and French. Discursive othering, in some cases, also involved ambivalence underlined by foreignness effects of the analysed terms. Indeed, next to semantically negative lexicon (e.g. *monster*, *zealous*, *disgusting*, etc.), some instances may have had humorous motivations and exploited the playfulness of linguistically novel terms (e.g. diminutivisation in (13), some metaphors, e.g. “growing an organ” in (10), “pride in masculinity” (18)). Humour and sarcasm were also present in examples (8) and (9) where negative evaluations of intellectual women were dismissed and ridiculed.

In the second research question posed above, I was also concerned with the potentially different degrees of othering effects fostered by unadapted and partially adapted borrowings as opposed to the loan translation. As many examples have shown, it is unlikely that the loan translation *niebieska pończocha* was less effective in this respect, as of its 21 occurrences only three were classified as either positive or neutral to positive. On the other hand, the loanword was accompanied by code-switched items in French, German, and English in four cases. In these cases (three of them negative; one neutral to positive), this accumulation of othering effects could possibly indicate that the loanword itself may not have achieved the same effect. Still, it is not possible to exclude the option that the code-switched items simply gloss the loanword, most likely strengthening pejoration by additionally emphasising the alleged obscurity of the concept. However, overall, the loan translation did not occur frequently enough to allow generalisations.

The distribution of examples over time was uneven, with the three decades 1860s-1880s accounting for over 50%. One reason for this might be the social developments that gave a more prominent role to women’s education and female audiences in the press that started in the 1860s (see Section 2 above). On the other hand, the low numbers of the terms in the 1890s are not easy to explain, but it may have been due to some gaps in the databases that only few occurrences were retrieved.

In terms of the third research question, which genres in the newspaper and magazine conglomerate featured such representations most frequently, the results have shown three major sources. Editorial material (30 cases; i.e., 45%) was the most important source, followed by reviews of books and plays (17; i.e., 26%), while novels in instalments also provided a considerable number of examples (12; i.e., 18%). The remaining c. 12% of the items include reports, a speech, a letter, and translations from a foreign

newspaper. If we view reviews and novels as similar in the sense that they concern themselves with literary creations and fictional worlds, c. 46% of the items were identified in this context, which is almost exactly the number found in the editorial material. Editorial material was very versatile, but it frequently collected local news and hard news, next to travel accounts, gossip and trivia. This distribution of sources shows that the bluestocking personae had some presence outside of the fictional and specialist literary worlds and featured in the material that targeted audiences interested in diverse material. It is difficult to make connections between the genres and evaluation types, as non-negative attitudes were few and far between. Still, understandably, positive and neutral examples typically come from pieces authored by women, for women and specialised publications for culturally-minded audiences, rather than from dailies.

6. Concluding remarks

In the nineteenth century, as the social and educational advancement of women progresses at different paces in Britain and in the Polish lands, they start to play a role in the publishing business, while female readership broadens. When studying representations of women in the Polish press, the focus on a possibly broad scope of publications is justifiable due to the nature of the electronic repositories available (Section 2 above). Thus, the material analysed here was largely drawn from daily newspapers or weekly and monthly magazines designed for heterogeneous audiences, which, however, mostly represented the educated strata of the society in partitioned Poland. As, to my knowledge, comprehensive analyses of the reception of the Bluestockings in the press published in this cultural circle are lacking (but see work on intellectual and literary women such as, e.g., Berkan-Jabłońska 2019 and the references), this exploratory study has made a step towards bridging this gap by focusing on specific referential terms.

The phenomena of othering discussed in the paper were specified as discourse and language strategies of representing women and female personae in an ostensibly harmless and light-hearted way, but also so as to voice essentially critical undertones and reveal ambivalent social attitudes. This ambivalence, as well as an occasional playful disguise or humorous motivations, are characteristic features of othering. It may be concluded that representations of women share some features with propaganda, though perhaps not necessarily in its top-down understanding. If propaganda

is defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett – O’Donnell 2015: 3), then, indeed, the lion’s share of the material analysed above attempted to foster specific perceptions of women in order to guide social responses to female activity in typically male spheres with a the aim of sustaining male hegemony, especially in the literary, intellectual, and other public domains. The representations discussed above could also be seen in connection to broader nationalistic ideologies, such as for example xenophobia¹⁷ in the social and cultural realm of gender roles and family structures. However, at the same time, other voices, infrequently but firmly, contested the male-made and male-oriented social norms with wit, creativity, and eloquence, using similar discursive resources.

The paper has only addressed some issues relevant to foreignness effects entailed in representing women through code-switching, borrowing or loan translations. Although a connection has been made to visual pragmatics (Carroll et al. 2013), despite the presence of typographic marking, this issue has not been studied in greater detail here for reasons of space. Moreover, a range of questions related to the more specific connotations of German, French, English terms could be posed in order to pursue potential cultural differences. It is also likely that culturally marked lexicon was used more broadly to represent social and cultural groupings, or for typification of minorities. The frameworks proposed here to study representations of intellectual women may be applied to pursue further representations of the many “others” in larger datasets in historical news discourse and other material in the future.

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¹⁷ I would like to thank Reviewer 1 for pointing this out.

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Propaganda discourse in an imperial setting: The case of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*¹

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ABSTRACT

Between 1870 and 1945 imperial regimes expanded, causing a redefinition in the territory of their empires; this reconfiguration of geo-political as well as cultural space was supported by the production of texts, which contributed to the dissemination of the main tenets of colonial ideology. England was at the centre of modern imperial history as it established a specific space policy that was based on the dichotomy 'home/far from' which emphasised the relationship between metropolis, a dynamic centre of innovation, and colony, the receiver of the benefits of 'civilisation', and was based on racial difference (Ballantyne – Burton 2012). This paper deals with propaganda discourse by focussing on the case of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921). Despite Strachey's distance from extreme militarism and hero-worship of the Victorian era, this successful text contributed to the construction of the British Empire cultural formation. The paper will adopt a corpus assisted analysis to illustrate how specific keywords and expressions in Strachey's work relate to the British imperial propaganda discourse based on white superiority. Lastly, it will also focus on how Strachey's depiction of Victoria's changing political status from Princess to Empress of India can be inserted into the larger framework of imperial propaganda discourse.

Keywords: British empire, India, Queen Victoria, imperialism, propaganda.

1. Introduction

Between 1870 and 1945 imperial regimes expanded, causing a redefinition in the territory of their empires; this reconfiguration of geo-political as well as cultural space was supported by the production of texts, which

¹ Although the authors worked closely on the preparation of this paper, Gabriella Del Lungo is responsible for the Introduction (Section 1) and Concluding Remarks (Section 7), whereas Sabrina Cappelli is responsible for Sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

contributed to the dissemination of the main tenets of the imperial ideology. England was at the centre of the modern imperial history as it established a specific space policy that was based on the dichotomy “home/far from” which emphasised the relationship between metropolis, a dynamic centre of innovation, and colony, the receiver of the benefits of “civilization”, and was essentially based on racial difference (Ballantyne – Burton 2012). As observed by Hobsbawm (2014: 31), the world was divided into smaller parts of developed countries, where “progress”, based on industrial society and technology, was indigenous and another larger part of backward countries in which it came as a foreign conqueror, assisted by minorities of local collaborators. The British certainly understood their empire hierarchically, in racial terms of superiority and inferiority. According to Metcalf (1995), the British sought to legitimate their rule of India emphasising a colonial view of India based on differences. However, as indicated by Cannadine (2001), their perception was not only based on notions of metropolitan-periphery analogy, but of sameness too, as they saw other people also as a formation of individuals who could be compared based on status similarity. This led to the recognition of equal social status – princes are princes everywhere – and formed the basis of the fully elaborate Raj in India.

The distinction between the two sectors of the world was not only geopolitical, but also cultural, as the ideology of the period mostly relied on white civilization superiority. The stereotype that imperial periphery was different from and inferior to the imperial metropolis was a common perception in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, as it was disseminated by various forms of popular propaganda such as spectacular ceremonies and exotic villages in exhibitions. Literature also contributed to disseminate imperial ideology and to construct a divided worldview opposing the two hemispheres, east/west. Perhaps the most influential writer to disseminate the idea of white civilisation superiority was Kipling. In his work, the empire assumed a complex mythical or legendary function, which he passed on to his readers. Others were fascinated by Indian extravaganza and, thanks largely to Disraeli, the British monarchy was shaped as an imperial crown of unprecedented grandeur. The construction of the cultural formation of the British empire was in no small part attained by identifying the empire with the English queen, Victoria, as the imperial period corresponds roughly, though not exactly, to the period of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837-1901).

MacKenzie (1990: 2) identifies an ideological cluster which formed out the intellectual, national, and world-wide conditions of the imperialism of the later Victorian era, and which came to be propagated by every organ of British life in the period. It was made up of militarism, a devotion to royalty

and worship of national heroes. Reverence for the monarchy developed only from the late 1870s and it was closely bound up with the monarch's, that is Victoria's, imperial role.

The successful biography by Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, contributed to the construction of the cultural formation of the imperial monarchy. Born in 1880 and later educated in Cambridge, he stands amongst the founders of the Bloomsbury Group, a collective known for its *avant-garde* approach regarding literature, art and philosophy. During his time at Cambridge, he closely associated with several future voices of Modernism such as Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Virginia Stephen (later Woolf) and Saxon Sydney-Turner. Strachey's personal relationships with the other Bloomsbury members would also often intertwine with his professional career as an acclaimed writer and critic. His biographies often adopted a critical outlook regarding the characters of their subjects. Such an approach based on irony and wit contrasts with the traditional reverent approach typical of earlier biographies. Strachey's distinctive style focused on the inner lives of the subjects, revealing their complexity of character and flaws.

Being an anti-conscriptionist and conscientious objector, Strachey wrote as a social critic of evangelicalism (Avery 2010: 841) and he stood in sharp contrast with the imperialist propaganda of the late Victorian era. However, in *Queen Victoria* Strachey focuses on the transformation of Victoria's character from a young princess to a petulant widow and an imperial matriarch. As he writes, her world-wide role of Empress provided her with excitement in her old age and a new significance to the ceremonial events that surrounded her.

The Queen established a particular relationship with the Indian dominion as she was strongly attracted by India and inclined to be very protective towards her Indian subjects and took her duties as Empress very seriously. The reign of queen Victoria was the heyday of the British Empire, a period of profound changes in British society, of the industrial revolution and the Great exhibition, but also permeated by a rigid morality whose emblem was the royal family. In his biography of Queen Victoria, Lytton Strachey constructs her life describing the virtues and the frailty of a female monarch without any sentimentalism, but rather through a witty and critical use of irony.

Most research on *Queen Victoria* is historical or ideological, as mentioned above, whereas there is a paucity of linguistic analyses of the work. Therefore, in order to analyse the language used by Strachey in his biography, a corpus – *Queen Victoria Biography* (QVB) – was created. The

approach adopted to analyse the imperialist propaganda discourse in the QVB is corpus assisted while addressing the following research questions:

- 1) Which keywords encode propaganda in QVB?
- 2) Which clusters are related to place and white British superiority?
- 3) How does Victoria's changing status relate to imperial propaganda discourse?

Section 2 focuses on biographies in Strachey's time whereas section 3 on propaganda. Section 4 describes the corpus and methodology adopted which is followed by data analysis, in section 5, and by the data discussion in section 6. Section 7 provides concluding remarks.

2. The evolution of biographies

Lytton Strachey was one of the pioneers of a great shift in the approach to biography literature. Hutch (1988: 3) states that there are two main distinguished approaches employed by biographers. The first is known as *unidimensional biography*, which is characterised by biographical stereotyping, aiming to locate the single most motivational value of a subject. In other words, such biographies were often written to idealize and display the moral virtues of the individual in question by presenting the lives of their subjects as examples of moral integrity. It is here that the concept of hero-worshipping is prevalent. Such a concept possessed great flexibility and obscurity (Hutch 1988) as there was a general agreement that the nation would benefit from worshipping great individuals, although there was no consensus on who they were. According to Atkinson (2010: 4), the terms *great* and *hero* were often used interchangeably, bringing further confusion to the whole idea. Such fuzziness was also provided by the naïve association between greatness and goodness while writers struggled to reconcile the two in morally ambiguous public characters. Such associations and hagiographic approaches were directly charged with imperialist propaganda, which typifies the Victorian period.

The second approach, known as *new biographers*, is based on writers' interest in the hidden lives of individuals whose personality was placed at the heart of their narrative. In contrast, Strachey chose to focus on famous characters, thus laying the foundation for the *multidimensional biography* approach in direct contrast with the Victorian *unidimensional biography*. As to this point, Ankersmit (2001) operates a distinction between description and representation. While description illustrates the truth, representation

provides a scope that is relevant to a certain context. Thus, accuracy does not necessarily provide the best representation which enables understanding more than the mere exposure to bare truth. However, in a multidimensional biography, the representation of a personality does not diminish the accuracy of a text, instead, it is considered a necessity to achieve truthfulness.

Personality became, then, the main point of the new biographers. While they did not believe that extraordinary deeds can explain a life (Thirriard 2021: 5), they assigned anecdotes a central role in revealing one's personality. It was believed that they revealed the individual's character in selective traits. As a consequence, anecdotes became the focal part of the narrative structure, as can be observed in Strachey's most famous works.

In his biographies, Strachey both created and destroyed the character of his subjects, as he did not only experiment with biographical formalities and styles, but also with reputation and how it could be deployed (Southern 2016). Thus, portraits resulting from previous modelling were critically dissected, as deconstruction was considered a tool to establish a relationship between the biographer and his/her subject (Hutch 1988: 6), and to draw away from the Victorian notion of hero-worship with its consequent moralistic image of the self. By furthermore being influenced by Freud's work, Strachey believed the individual to be constantly entangled in the inner conflicts of personality, which may be seen as the defining factor in establishing a new school of biography that would continue throughout the 20th century (Thirriard 2021).

3. Persuasive devices and propaganda discourse

MacKenzie (1990: 3) states that propaganda can be defined as the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another with the specific intention of influencing the recipient attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced. Additionally, Zečić (2022) stresses how manipulation involves abuse of power and domination. Those who are being manipulated often do not perceive the process that is being enacted through the primary function of language, which is ideological framing. Hence, manipulation is a subtle tool of propaganda, affecting the subconscious sphere of the individual to correct their existing view of the world. For Karamova et al. (2019), it should be evaluated in terms of an implicit speech influence on the addressee's subconscious. However, while consciousness is individual, the subconscious sphere is affected by manipulation and has more

of a collective connotation (Karamova et al. 2019) which was attained not only by newspapers but also by biographers like Strachey.

To be most effective, propaganda necessitates the use of persuasive devices. According to Zečić (2022), persuasive discourse focuses on the recipients by providing them with information that is to be understood and, most importantly, that serves the interests of such recipients. By contrast, propaganda is a systematic and deliberate attempt to shape the perception of reality, while redirecting the behaviour of the individual to achieve a response that furthers the propagandist's own interests.

As to the linguistic rhetorical devices implemented, metaphors can contribute to the creation of a stereotypical and one-sided vision of a specific subject. Grammatical structures can also be used for persuasive purposes as, for instance, pronouns such as *we* and *ours* promote a sense of involvement, solidarity, and collectivism. Repetition can accompany the pronoun use to create a cohesive pattern and further stress the parts that the deliverer wants the addressee to focus on (Karamova et al. 2019). In addition, passive constructions can be employed to either alienate the achievements of opponents, or to distance one-self from the expressed opinion. In doing so, an individual may promote the removal of responsibility for what has been previously stated. In addition, nominalisation can be adopted to construct a positive image of one-self, while still negatively framing the adversary's actions. Karamova et al. (2019) identify the following main persuasive strategies that can be implemented through the methods described above: implication / reduction / distance from the expressed opinion / contact with the addressee.

Implication and reduction are accomplished using metaphors, passive structures, nominalization, and indefinite personal construction with common semantics of alienation. In the case of implication, presuppositions are also frequently employed. Indeed, the assertion is presented under the guise of presupposition, which does not require evidence to be considered true by the addressee. Furthermore, to establish distance from the expressed opinion, individuals often exploit structures that carry nominalizations with a general meaning of denying responsibilities for what is perceived as a necessary action. Lastly, contact with the addressee is achieved through a positive marked evaluative vocabulary designed to arouse the attention and trust of the addressee. Such a trust is then exploited by representatives of specific ideologies (Karamova et al. 2019). Appeals to the addressee are also launched quite often to impress the idea that they are part of the solution of a serious and impending issue (often political). Therefore, all these factors create a collective mentality where the individual does not

think to be separate from a group of peers. Instead, the individual acts in the name of the group, whose components, in turn, often become active in spreading propaganda themselves.

4. Corpus and methodology

To analyse the language of imperial propaganda discourse in Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, a small corpus – *Queen Victoria's Biography* (QVB) – of 88,411 words was compiled by downloading *Queen Victoria* in a .txt format from the website *The Internet Archive*. The corpus was subsequently divided into different .txt files, one for each chapter of Strachey's *Queen Victoria*. The software used to analyse QVB is *Lancsbox 6.0* (Brezina – Weill-Tessier – McEnergy 2020).

The tools employed to analyse the data were Words, KWic, GraphColl, Text and Ngrams. Words generated a list of the most frequent keywords by comparing QVB with The British National Corpus included in *Lancsbox 6.0*. According to Stefanowitsch (2020), collocations are a quantitative phenomenon and to ask whether two words form a collocation, is essentially equivalent to asking whether one of those words occurs more frequently in a given position than one would expect by chance. These phraseological distributions assume that words do not operate as isolated elements but can rather be considered as larger units of meaning (Sinclair 1996). GraphColl was used to visualise the collocations of the chosen keywords while Text allowed an in-depth insight into the context in which a word or phrase is employed, and it was used to perform close readings of the collocations and to extract relevant examples. Lastly, Ngrams was employed to search for clusters and their construction of imperial propaganda discourse which was then analysed qualitatively.

The methodology adopted is Partington's (2008) Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) which uses the corpus for replicable quantitative techniques and employs the resulting data as a point of departure for a qualitative analysis of imperial propaganda discourse, in this case. The analysis was initiated after choosing a list of relevant keywords which refer to Victoria and imperial propaganda, more specifically *empire, British, civilised, India, colonies/ial, Princess Victoria, Queen Victoria, Victoria, empress*. The collocations and concordances of the chosen keywords were then analysed to identify how they encode imperial discourse and how they are used to convey Victoria's changing status within propaganda discourse.

5. Data analysis

5.1 Queen Victoria biography and the notion of empire

Table 1 indicates the most frequent collocations of the keyword *empire* which appears recurrently related to vastness and celestial, thus recalling a context of greatness of the English empire. This further emerges in Table 2, wherein *empire* is used to communicate its sheer physical force and power as shown in its concordances.

Table 1. GraphColl collocation of *empire*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq. R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
vastness	1	10	1	1	0	1	14.116	11.526
sway	2	20	1	1	0	1	12.678	10.526
celestial	2	20	1	1	0	1	12.678	10.526
representative	4	30	1	1	0	1	11.850	9.941
thank	5	40	1	0	0	1	11.267	9.526
flew	6	50	1	1	1	1	10.816	9.204
message	7	60	1	1	0	1	10.449	8.941

Table 2. KWIC results for *empire*

Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	powerful Sovereign on her imperial sway, the vastness of her	Empire	and the success and strength of her fleets and
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	and over again. That night her message flew over the	Empire	From my heart I thank my beloved people. May
Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	orders were given that, as no representative of the Celestial	Empire	was present, he should be included in the diplomatic

Strachey's connection to British exceptionalism can already be observed in Table 1 and Table 2. Geographical vastness is inferred in Table 2 with the preposition *over* conveying movement along a large surface. Additionally, the keyword *empire* is linked to military strength, as can be observed in Table 2 when referring to the success of the fleets. Interestingly, the collocate *celestial* that appears in Table 1, does not refer to the superiority of the British

Empire but it is rather an adjective referring to the Chinese Empire. However, after a close reading of such passages in Strachey's book, it is still possible to identify an underlying sentiment of superiority over the Chinese people since, for instance, the representative of the *Celestial Empire* is described as having an *impassive yellow face*. A passage claiming that such an envoy was an imposter is also present, although Strachey himself seems to discredit the accusation by defining it as *rumours amongst ill-natured people*. Additionally, as shown in the lines below, Strachey hints at Victoria's fascination towards China through the adjective *eminent* and much *impressed*. Such an interest foreshadows what would then become an almost obsessive Orientalist interest towards India based not on genuine respect, as seen in the veiled disparaging comments referred to the Chinese diplomat, but on a desire to appropriate and integrate the East in the "superior" British empire:

- (1) At that moment a Chinaman, dressed in full national costume, stepped out into the middle of the central nave, and, advancing slowly towards the royal group, did obeisance to Her Majesty. The Queen, much impressed, had no doubt that he was an eminent mandarin; and, when the final procession was formed, orders were given that, as no representative of the Celestial Empire was present, he should be included in the diplomatic cortege. He accordingly, with the utmost gravity, followed immediately behind the Ambassadors. He subsequently disappeared, and it was rumoured, among ill-natured people, that, far from being a mandarin, the fellow was a mere imposter. But nobody ever really discovered the nature of the comments that had been lurking behind the matchless impassivity of that yellow face (127-128).

These theories would be in accordance with MacKenzie (1990) claiming that popular British imperialism became a stronger, and not a weaker force, during Edwardian and immediate post-Edwardian society. British exceptionalism was still prevalent in Strachey's *Queen Victoria* partly through the association of the keyword empire with vastness, strength and greatness, thus confirming that *empire* had a crucial role in conveying a propagandistic discourse.

Another manifestation of British exceptionalism can be observed in Table 3 and Table 4, displaying the collocates for the keyword *British* and its concordances. While the collocates and concordances indicated in Table 1 and Table 2 are linked to the perceived greatness and superiority of the British

with the concept of vastness, the term *British* itself in Table 3 and Table 4 is connected to the semantic sphere of laws and legislatures. As indicated in Table 3, the first most frequent collocate is *constitution*. Such a link seems to underline British superiority in terms of legislative and political power which seems to legitimise the British dominion over the colonies. Hence, the keyword *British* can be considered part of the empire propaganda discourse.

Table 3. GraphColl collocation results for *British*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.R	Freq.L	Freq.R	Rank	Likelihood	Effect
constitution	1	220	3	0	3	3	22.935	6.914
pacifico	2	10	1	1	0	1	11.686	9.789
broadside	2	10	1	1	0	1	11.686	9.789
comprehend	2	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789
gallery	2	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789

Table 4. KWIC results for *British*

Lord_Palmerston_ Queen_Victoria.txt	affairs of France. Nevertheless, in an official despatch to the	British	Ambassador in Paris, he repeated the approval of the
Last_Years_Of_ Prince_Consort_ Queen_Victoria.txt	to the Royal Agricultural Society, and attended meetings of the	British	Association. The National Gallery particularly interested him: he drew
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	YOUR SPIRIT; now that slavery is even abolished in the	British	Colonies, I do not comprehend WHY YOUR LOT ALONE
Lord_Melbourne_ Queen_Victoria.txt	criticise books, throw out a remark or two on the	British	Constitution, make some passing reflections on human life, and
Gladstone_And_ Lord_Beaconsfield_ Queen_Victoria.txt	sacrosanct embodiment of venerable traditions – a vital element in the	British	Constitution – a Queen by Act of Parliament. But unfortunately
Marriage_Queen_ Victoria.txt	A queen's husband was an entity unknown to the	British	Constitution. In State affairs there seemed to be no
Old_Age_Queen_ Victoria.txt	allowed her mind to develop. Under Disraeli's tutelage the	British	Dominions over the seas had come to mean much

Lord_Palmerston_Queen_Victoria.txt	night-cap.” From Lovely Albert! a broadside preserved at the	British	Museum. In January, 1854, it was whispered that the Prince
Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt	enterprise,’ he said. Canada was then entirely French, and the	British	only came afterwards... Lord M. explained this very clearly
Lord_Palmerston_Queen_Victoria.txt	s diplomacy; and when his support of Don Pacifico, a	British	subject, in a quarrel with the Greek Government, seemed

In Table 5 and Table 6 the keyword *civilised* collocates with *corner*, *efforts* and *world*, thus carrying a positive connotation; however, it would be legitimate to assume that the opposite term *uncivilised* would carry a negative meaning. As claimed by Ballantyne – Burton (2012), the difference between what and who was considered civilised or uncivilised was based on racial characteristics, in which the British assumed for themselves the role of those who would export civilisation and decide who was worthy of such a privilege. The collocation *civilised world* then perfectly fits within the imperial white superiority propaganda, common not only in the Victorian era but also in Strachey’s own time. Therefore, once again, despite his anti-militaristic views, Strachey reiterates and confirms the Victorian imperialist view that identified Britain’s role as an exporter of progress and civilisation towards territories far from the metropolis and belonging to the colonies which were perceived to be uncivilised.

Table 5. GraphColl collocation results for *civilised*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Rank	Likelihood	Effect
corner	1	30	1	1	0	1	14.116	11.526
efforts	2	90	1	0	1	1	11.897	9.941
world	3	360	1	0	1	1	9.122	7.941

Table 6. KWic results for *civilised*

Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	speeches, and carried on communications with every corner of the	civilised	world – and his efforts were rewarded. On May 1, 1851, the
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However, Strachey also romanticised his and Victoria's view of the colonies by filtering their perception under the grandeur of British rule, as can be observed in the following instance in the text:

- (2) She swelled with a new wonderful elation, while he, conjuring up before her Oriental visions, dazzled her eyes with an imperial grandeur of which she had only dimly dreamed (224).

Such a role can be observed clearly in the infantilization of the Indian philosophy and school of thought, which was not only common in Strachey's time, but would also continue beyond it (Gibson 2014).

As shown in Table 7 and Table 8, the keyword *colonies* collocates most frequently with professional, servitude, abolishes, punishment and Indian while suggesting a clear sense of authority and possession over the colonies. This is further foregrounded in the KWiC concordances which indicate a close link between the colonies and London and/or the proximity between the leading English manufacturers and the East India Company in the colony.

Table 7. GraphColl collocation results for colonies/colonial

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
professional	1	10	1	1	0	1	13.081	10.789
servitude	1	10	1	1	0	1	13.081	10.789
comprehend	1	10	1	0	1	1	13.081	10.789
sibthorpe	1	10	1	0	1	1	13.081	10.789
debate	5	20	1	0	1	1	11.643	9.789
abolished	6	30	1	1	0	1	10.816	9.204
punishment	6	30	1	1	0	1	10.816	9.204
indians	6	30	1	0	1	1	10.816	9.204

Table 8. KWiC results for colonies/colonial

Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	the very long period of my professional servitude in the	Colonies;	and if this is not attainable, IT IS A
Old_Age_Queen_ Victoria.txt	and surpassed. In London, she opened in high state the	Colonial	and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington. On this occasion

Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	smoothly. The leading manufacturers warmly took up the idea; the	colonies	and the East India Company were sympathetic; the great
Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt	SPIRIT; now that slavery is even abolished in the British	Colonies,	I do not comprehend WHY YOUR LOT ALONE SHOULD

The concordances confirm the submission of the colonies to the white “superior” motherland while Strachey, on the one hand, distanced himself from Victorian hero-worship and militarism through humanizing and critical descriptions of character flaws and political campaigns, but on the other, he was still susceptible to the belief of British superiority which he contributed to spread. Such a theory can also be observed in the following instances extracted from the text:

- (3) If Victoria had died in the early seventies, there can be little doubt that the voice of the world would have pronounced her a failure. [...] But she was reserved for a very different fate (219).

Here Strachey acknowledges Victoria’s failures also attributed in a wider contest of England’s instability due to military crisis, however he immediately proceeds to overturn the expectations of the reader by contrasting the anticipation of a glorious future in line with the Edwardian imperialism propaganda. His belief in British superiority and portrayal of Orientalism can, instead, be clearly observed in the next extract describing Victoria’s fascination with the “East”:

- (4) [...] imperialism was the dominant creed of the country. It was Victoria’s as well. [...] Under Disraeli’s tutelage the British Dominions over the seas had come to mean much more to her than ever before, and, in particular, she had grown enamoured of the East. The thought of India fascinated her; she set to, and learnt a little Hindustani; she engaged some Indian servants, who became her inseparable attendants, and one of whom, Munshi Abdul Karim, eventually almost succeeded to the position which had once been John Brown’s (262).

Strachey identifies imperialism not only with the Country’s beliefs but also directly with Victoria’s. The fascination that Strachey portrays through words such as “enamoured” however is always to be viewed in a context of inferiority and subordination to England’s rule and Victoria’s power.

Indeed, her curiosity and interest for the exotic appear to be frivolous and limited to extent that seemed necessary to enhance her perceived grandeur and prestige, as can be observed by Strachey's stressing the employment of Indian servants, highlighting once again the position of servitude that India had towards England.

This conclusion matches the canons of Edwardian imperialism founded on white superiority that spread through the empire and was aided by several imperial propaganda civilian societies. One of these was known as The Victoria league. Riedi (2002) claims that the Victoria league was much more successful in their propaganda by restricting their actions to include only "practical" work in areas that could be seen as a legitimate extension of the 'domestic sphere' that Victorian ideology granted to women. However, such a league had difficulties in incorporating India in their vision of the empire (Riedi 2002: 594). Indeed, imperialist propaganda based on white superiority was strongly against allowing Indian men to integrate within English society due to a perceived risk of sexual violence (Riedi 2002: 596). Therefore, the orientalist's fascination with India was to be kept separate and physically distant from England which was supposed to control India while not allowing any integration or unification.

Such a concept of separation and distance is found in Strachey's *Queen Victoria* that portrayed the monarch as a matriarch ruling over the empire and India as an extension of domestic duties. An instance of this kind of effort can be observed in the following extract, in which Strachey clearly emphasises Victoria's role as that of a Queen who is also mother to her people:

- (5) 'Noble fellows!' she wrote to the King of the Belgians 'I own I feel as if these were my own children; my heart beats for them as for my nearest and dearest.' (172).

In doing so, Strachey's male and female readership alike could identify and support the extension of Victoria's domestic identity, which was also constructed through anecdotes of her daily life, especially once married to Albert, as shown in the following extract:

- (6) When, in wrath, the Prince one day had locked himself into his room, Victoria, no less furious, knocked on the door to be admitted 'Who is there?' he asked. 'The Queen of England,' was the answer. He did not move, and again there was a hail of knocks. The question and the answer were repeated many times; but at last there was a pause, and then a gentler knocking. 'Who is there?' came once more the

relentless question. But this time the reply was different. ‘Your wife, Albert.’ And the door was immediately opened (102).

Strachey draws a clear parallel between Victoria’s role as a Queen and her role as a wife. Additionally, he also humanizes her by depicting a common emotion such as fury and by narrating a matrimonial quarrel with her husband, an episode that many of her subject would have experienced and thus been able to identify with, thus distancing himself from the hero-worshipping typical of the earlier Victorian biographers. Furthermore, the quarrel is solved once Victoria recognizes her role as a wife, thus highlighting her domestic virtue and diligence to her duties.

Hence, as shown in Tables 9 and 10, India is viewed as an extension of the home-motherland, thus as an entity to be dominated even by a woman such as Queen Victoria. In Table 9, the first collocate for the keyword *India* is *empress*, referring to Victoria as *Empress of India*. This collocation forms a concordance that not only can be considered related to white British superiority but can also be considered a starting point in the analysis regarding Victoria’s changing status and imperial propaganda.

Table 9. GraphColl collocation results for *India*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
empress	1	100	3	3	0	2	30.807	8.789
east	2	50	2	2	0	2	21.673	9.204
the	3	60360	13	8	5	3	13.729	1.667
quintessential	4	10	1	0	1	1	12.713	10.526
pivot	4	10	1	0	1	1	12.713	10.526
fascinated	6	20	1	0	1	1	11.276	9.526
colonies	7	30	1	1	0	1	10.449	8.941
perturbed	7	30	1	0	1	1	10.449	8.941
usually	7	30	1	0	1	1	10.449	8.941

Table 10. KWIC results for *India*

Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for	India,	was much perturbed. But the Faery was
Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	England ought to become the Empress of	India.	Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity,

Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	to dine with the new Empress of	India.	That night the Faery, usually so homely
Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	the idea; the colonies and the East	India	Company were sympathetic; the great foreign nations
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	enamoured of the East. The thought of	India	fascinated her; she set to, and learnt
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	the Queen of England, the Empress of	India,	the quintessential pivot round which the whole

5.2 Queen Victoria biography and titles of power

Strachey's frequent use of titles of power emerges in the Ngram results in Table 11, in which the concordances relate to the political titles and positions of power regarding the evolution of Victoria and her consort's status and the Parliament. This appears also in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 11. Results for the Ngram tool

Type	Rank	Freq.	Range
in the house of commons	1	11	5
the queen and the prince	2	7	3
of the prince of wales	3	6	3
the king of the belgians	3	6	4
at the same time the	5	5	5
she was queen of england	5	5	5
but that was not all	7	4	3
majority in the house of	7	4	3
prince leopold of saxe coburg	7	4	2
that s quite another thing	7	4	1
the duchess of kent and	7	4	3
the foreign policy of england	7	4	2
the ladies of the bedchamber	7	4	2
the prince of wales the	7	4	3
to the king of the	7	4	2

Moreover, in QVB Queen Victoria is very often referred to with titles that indicate her changing status. Initially she is referred to as “princess” or “Princess Victoria” in Table 12 and Table 13. The collocation *confided* in Table 12 suggests an association with Victoria’s young age and inexperience at the time. She is depicted as a modest person ready to listen to more expert advice, a quality that reflects well on a ruler’s domestic female identity.

Table 12. GraphColl collocation results for *Princess Victoria*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
the	1	60360	17	11	6	2	11.838	1.317
franconia	2	10	1	1	0	1	11.686	9.789
confided	2	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789

Table 13. KWIC results for *Princess Victoria*

Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	became assets of the official majority of the nation. The	Princess Victoria	was henceforward the living symbol of the victory
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	accession, the Radical newspapers were full of suggestions that the	Princess Victoria	was in danger from the machinations of her
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	attempt to prepare the ground for a match between the	Princess Victoria	and one of the sons of the Prince
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	her Major-Domo. There were familiarities, and one day the	Princess Victoria	discovered the fact. She confided what she had
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	Kent sat on the King’s right hand, and the	Princess Victoria	opposite. At the end of the dinner, in
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	too, had an adherent who could not be neglected. The	Princess Victoria	said nothing, but she had been much attached
Antecedents_ Queen_Victoria.txt	territory of Amorbach in Lower Franconia. In 1803 he married the	Princess Victoria,	at that time seventeen years of age. Three
Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt	to Kensington Palace, she was put to play with the	Princess Victoria,	who was the same age as herself. The

Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt	would in all probability never again be a mother; the	Princess Victoria,	therefore, was recognised by Parliament as heir-presumptive;
Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt	close at hand. All eyes, all thoughts, turned towards the	Princess Victoria;	but she still remained, shut away in the

However, in Tables 14 and Table 15 the title “Queen Victoria” (5 occurrences) replaces the title “Princess Victoria” which in turn is replaced by “Victoria”, which collocates with the possessive Saxons genitive (217 occurrences, see Table 16 and Table 17), and “the Queen” (207 occurrences). In Table 15 Victoria is still represented as a pleasant figure which contrasts with the depiction of her uncles defined as *nasty old men*. Furthermore, the concordances of *Queen Victoria* present the unusual collocation with *dachshunds* (Table 14).

Table 14. GraphColl collocation results for *Queen Victoria*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
dachshund	1	10	1	1	0	1	13.081	10.789
nasty	1	10	1	0	1	1	13.081	10.789
unknowing	1	10	1	0	1	1	13.081	10.789
steady	4	20	1	0	1	1	11.643	9.789
baden	5	30	1	0	1	1	10.816	9.204

Table 15. KWIC results for *Queen Victoria*

Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt	all, struck everybody with overwhelming force was the contrast between	Queen Victoria	and her uncles. The nasty old men, debauched
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	majority of her subjects had never known a time when	Queen Victoria	had not been reigning over them. She had
Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	in the Belgian capital, but she was not remarked; and	Queen Victoria	passed unknowing before the steady gaze of one
Widowhood_Queen_Victoria.txt	Consort was the central turning-point in the history of	Queen Victoria.	She herself felt that her true life had

Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	the visitor of “Waldmann: the very favourite little dachshund of	Queen Victoria;	who brought him from Baden, April 1872; died, July 11, 1881.”
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Table 16. GraphColl collocation results for *Victoria*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
s	1	4790	48	1	47	8	50.061	1.758

Table 17. first 15 KWIC results for *Victoria*

Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	be of an extremely limited kind. Over the whole of	Victoria’	s private life the Baroness reigned supreme; and she
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	CHAPTER IX. OLD AGE I Meanwhile in	Victoria’	s private life many changes and developments had taken
Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	it seems probable that, at the time of her death,	Victoria’	s private fortune approached two million pounds. In order
Widowhood_Queen_Victoria.txt	would join forces with Denmark in a war against Prussia	Victoria’	s agitation grew febrile in its intensity. Towards her
Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt	accident. He escaped with a few cuts and bruises; but	Victoria’	s alarm was extreme, though she concealed it. “It
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	For in her last years there was a fascination in	Victoria’	s amiability which had been lacking even from the
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	the small bowing head. It was in her family that	Victoria’	s ascendancy reached its highest point. All her offspring
Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	future of the Irish Church was hanging in the balance,	Victoria’	s attention was drawn to another proposed reform. It
Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt	to an end, there had been a complete change in	Victoria’	s attitude towards him. His appreciation of the Prince

Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	Martin agreed; and yet the canker spread. In another direction	Victoria'	s comprehension of the spirit of her age has
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	obeyed the spirit; still the daily hours of labour proclaimed	Victoria'	s consecration to duty and to the ideal of
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	an invalid from birth, died prematurely, shortly after his marriage.	Victoria'	s cup of sorrows was indeed overflowing; and the
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	pyramids, tombs, statues, cairns, and seats of inscribed granite, proclaimed	Victoria'	s dedication to the dead. There, twice a year,
Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt	of private life. Certainly her hand is everywhere discernible in	Victoria'	s early correspondence. The Journal is written in the
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	even a play. One of the most marked indications of	Victoria'	s enfranchisement from the thralldom of widowhood had been

Such an unusual collocation can be justified by Strachey's continuous attempt in building her matron's female identity by depicting scenarios of domesticity referring to her favourite domestic companion, as in Table 15.

Table 18. GraphColl collocation results for *empress*

Collocate	Rank	Freq. (scaled)	Freq.LR	Freq.L	Freq.R	Range	Likelihood	Effect
india	1	60	3	0	3	2	30.807	8.789
the	2	60360	18	14	4	3	13.965	1.399
victoria	3	2620	4	1	3	2	13.561	3.755
england	4	1330	3	2	1	3	12.349	4.318
audacity	5	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789
betrothed	5	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789
quintessential	5	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789
pivot	5	10	1	0	1	1	11.686	9.789
become	9	410	2	1	1	2	11.199	5.431

Table 19. KWIC results for *empress*

Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	of Beaconsfield went to Windsor to dine with the new	Empress	of India. That night the Faery, usually so homely
Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	suggestion that the Queen of England ought to become the	Empress	of India. Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity,
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	personal matter, too. Victoria was the Queen of England, the	Empress	of India, the quintessential pivot round which the whole
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	it must not take place. A fierce struggle between the	Empress	and the Chancellor followed. Victoria, whose hatred of her
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	following year the Prince Imperial, the only son of the	Empress	Eugenie, to whom Victoria, since the catastrophe of 1870, had
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	a violent crisis. One of the daughters of the new	Empress	had become betrothed to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who
Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt	the hostility of the Tsar. Victoria, as well as the	Empress,	highly approved of the match. Of the two brothers
Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt	in a flowery oration proposed the health of the Queen-	Empress.	His audacity was well received, and his speech was
Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt	him; but at last a visit of the Emperor and	Empress	to England was arranged. Directly he appeared at Windsor
Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt	as 'tres compliquee.'" Victoria, too, became much attached to the	Empress,	whose looks and graces she admired without a touch

In Table 19 Victoria is referred to as “empress” only after she becomes “Queen of England and Empress of India”. This timeframe is linked to the findings displayed in Table 18, where the lexical items *England*, *Victoria* and *empress* appear among the collocations. Moreover, the recurrence of the title Empress of India makes it possible to follow Strachey’s chronological

imperial propaganda discourse starting from the beginning till when he presents the queen as eager to establish an official link with India:

- (7) Disraeli, who had suddenly veered towards a new Imperialism, had thrown out the suggestion that the Queen of England ought to become the Empress of India. Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity, and, in season and out of season, pressed upon her Prime Minister the desirability of putting his proposal into practice. He demurred; but she was not to be baulked; and in 1876, in spite of his own unwillingness and that of his entire Cabinet, he found himself obliged to add to the troubles of a stormy session by introducing a bill for the alteration of the Royal Title (228).

Strachey shows how Victoria was pleased with her title of Empress of India and the new close relationship established between herself and the Indian subcontinent. As observed also by Le Jeune (2017), one of the aspects of India the Queen mostly admired was its ornamentalism. After the new title of empress was conferred to Victoria, celebrations were held both in England and in Dehli. Strachey shows how happy and satisfied she was about the ceremonials that surrounded the bestowal of the new title:

- (8) When the affair was successfully over, the imperial triumph was celebrated in a suitable manner. On the day of the Delhi Proclamation, the new Earl of Beaconsfield went to Windsor to dine with the new Empress of India. That night the Faery, usually so homely in her attire, appeared in a glittering panoply of enormous uncut jewels, which had been presented to her by the reigning Princes of her Raj. At the end of the meal the Prime Minister, breaking through the rules of etiquette, arose, and in a flowery oration proposed the health of the Queen-Empress. His audacity was well received, and his speech was rewarded by a smiling curtsy (229).

Strachey also underlines the centrality of the monarchy in English politics, in particular the role played by Victoria's personality as Queen of England and Empress of India, not only in representing the new imperialism in the late nineteenth century, but also in constructing its ideology. He identifies with the Crown, and thus directly with Victoria, England's might and extraordinary destiny, highlighting not only the yoke that Victoria had over India but also stressing the "superior" vitality of the "English race" embodied by Victoria's long reign:

- (9) Naturally it was in the Crown that the mysticism of the English polity was concentrated – the Crown, with its venerable antiquity, its sacred associations, its imposing spectacular array. But, for nearly two centuries, common-sense had been predominant in the great building, and the little, unexplored, inexplicable corner had attracted small attention. Then, with the rise of imperialism, there was a change. For imperialism is a faith as well as a business; as it grew, the mysticism in English public life grew with it; and simultaneously a new importance began to attach to the Crown. The need for a symbol – a symbol of England’s might, of England’s worth, of England’s extraordinary and mysterious destiny – became felt more urgently than ever before. The Crown was that symbol: and the Crown rested upon the head of Victoria. Thus, it happened that while by the end of the reign the power of the sovereign had appreciably diminished, the prestige of the sovereign had enormously grown. Yet this prestige was not merely the outcome of public changes; it was an intensely personal matter, too. Victoria was the Queen of England, the Empress of India, the quintessential pivot round which the whole magnificent machine was revolving – but how much more besides! (263)

He, then, goes on listing Victoria’s qualities that make her the best representative for this public role, thus strongly connecting propaganda for the empire with the monarch. As observed by Cannadine (2001: 206), “a whole range of public ceremonials was evolved and elaborated, invented and inaugurated, to commemorate the rites of passage of imperial British monarchs in ways that were both far-reaching and of unprecedented extravagance”. Strachey records Victoria’s role in such public ceremonials:

- (10) In London, she opened in high state the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington. On this occasion the ceremonial was particularly magnificent; a blare of trumpets announced the approach of Her Majesty; the ‘National Anthem’ followed; and the Queen, seated on a gorgeous throne of hammered gold, replied with her own lips to the address that was presented to her. Then she rose, and, advancing upon the platform with regal port, acknowledged the acclamations of the great assembly by a succession of curtseys, of elaborate and commanding grace (243-244).

Strachey also shows how Disraeli contributed to the promotion of the imperial role of Queen Victoria by surrounding their relationship with

a romantic aura. Indeed, Disraeli went so far as to call Victoria the Fairy, forming “an inseparable unity” in promoting the new mysticism of the crown:

- (11) Faery gift! Did he smile as he wrote the words? Perhaps; and yet it would be rash to conclude that his fervid declarations were altogether without sincerity. Actor and spectator both, the two characters were so intimately blended together in that odd composition that they formed an inseparable unity, and it was impossible to say that one of them was less genuine than the other. [...] he could be overwhelmed by the immemorial panoply of royalty, and, thrilling with the sense of his own strange elevation, dream himself into a gorgeous phantasy of crowns and powers and chivalric love (226).

Queen Victoria, on the contrary, retained her common-sense attitude as noted by Strachey (p. 227): “Her emotions, with all their intensity and all their exaggeration, retained the plain prosaic texture of everyday life”.

On the occasion of her jubilee, the close relationship between Queen Victoria and her people, both British and colonial, is solemnly recorded by Strachey:

- (12) Next year was the fiftieth of her reign, and in June the splendid anniversary was celebrated in solemn pomp. Victoria, surrounded by the highest dignitaries of her realm, escorted by a glittering galaxy of kings and princes, drove through the crowded enthusiasm of the capital to render thanks to God in Westminster Abbey. In that triumphant hour the last remaining traces of past antipathies and past disagreements were altogether swept away. The Queen was hailed at once as the mother of her people and as the embodied symbol of their imperial greatness; and she responded to the double sentiment with all the ardour of her spirit. England and the people of England, she knew it, she felt it, were, in some wonderful and yet quite simple manner, *hers*. Exultation, affection, gratitude, a profound sense of obligation, an unbounded pride – such were her emotions; and, colouring and intensifying the rest, there was something else. At last, after so long, happiness – fragmentary, perhaps, and charged with gravity, but true and unmistakable none the less – had returned to her. The unaccustomed feeling filled and warmed her consciousness. When, at Buckingham Palace again, the long ceremony over, she was asked how she was, “I am very tired, but very happy”, she said (244).

In essence, Strachey's biography of Queen Victoria can be considered a piece of propaganda as it contributed to the construction of the imperial cultural formation of England by identifying the sovereign with the very emblem of monarchy and empire even throughout her changing status in positions of power. It, however, presents a specific type of imperialism, not so much marked by Darwinian and militaristic excesses, but characterized by a sort of matriarchal governance. Strachey represents the female monarch as the centre of family life, extending her influence on the empire as if it was just an extension of her family. Furthermore, despite his anti-militaristic views, keywords, collocation and concordance analyses have uncovered how Strachey reiterates and consolidates the Victorian imperialist view in which Britain assumed the role of progress and civilisation exporter towards those that were viewed as uncivilised.

Even though the most extreme Darwinist and militaristic tones of the imperialist ideology are absent from the QVB, the favourable light shed on the mystical quality of the British Empire and on Victoria, a Tory imperialist herself no less than her minister, shows clearly that her biography is a piece of propaganda. Such propaganda favours the colonial frame of mind so widespread in Victorian and Edwardian Britain among all social classes and which, as MacKenzie (1990) claims, inaugurated a period – which would last until the accession of Elizabeth II – in which all great royal occasions would be imperial.

6. Discussion of the data

The analysis of the data has so far highlighted that the keywords *empire*, *British*, *colony* and *civilised* encode propaganda in QVB, which can be achieved also through the persuasive techniques and devices previously discussed. While *empire* collocates with the semantic sphere of vastness and greatness and its concordances refer to the sphere of legal structures, the keyword *British* also collocates with *constitution*, thus creating a pattern that conveys British superiority in regard to political and legislative power. Hence, propaganda is encoded by legitimising British dominion over the colonies, in this case, through implication, which Karamova et al. (2019) considers one of main persuasive strategy. An instance of the implication of British superiority is achieved by the nominalisation occurring in example (1), observable in the cluster *impassivity of that yellow face*.

The data analysis of QVB has also foregrounded the cluster *Empress of India* as being related to place and white superiority, since it clearly conveys

Victoria's possession and power over an entity which she ruled from a distance. Such a notion is further strengthened by the keyword *colony* and its collocates with *India* and other lexical terms suggesting subservience, thus reinforcing the idea of submission to a white motherland. The collocation *civilised world*, referring to space dominated by English influence, contributes to the reinforcement of the idea of England as an exporter of civilization to its domains and submissive colonies. Thus, it can also be considered as being related to place and white superiority.

However, while the colonies were certainly viewed as a conquered domain of the empire that had to submit to the English motherland, they were also heavily romanticised, as can be observed in example (2). The brief passage utilises repetition to implement the persuasive reduction strategy described by Karamova et al. (2019), through which propaganda is enacted by deliberately attempting to shape the perception of reality (Zečić 2022). The reduction consists of the limited and deceiving romanticised view of the colonies and the Orient provided by the text, while repetition is not implemented by the reiteration of single words but through the constant recurrence of the same semantic sphere. Strachey, indeed, juxtaposes the repetition of terms related to the semantic sphere of excitement and greatness like *wonderful*, *elation* and *grandeur*, and terms related to the semantic sphere of dreams and dream-like states such as *conjuring*, *visions*, *dazzled* and *dreamed*. Traces of this dream-like fascination can also be observed in Table 9, which displays the collocation results for the keyword *India*. As described by Karamova et al. (2019), repetition creates a cohesive pattern and further stresses the parts that the deliverer wants the addressee to focus on. In this case, Strachey's cohesive pattern is achieved through the repetition of semantic spheres which allows the reader to focus on a reductive and romanticised view of the Orient, thus promoting the taste for the exotic prevalent at the time. This notion can also be confirmed in example (4), where Strachey once again stresses the fascination that Victoria held for India: « [...] she had grown enamoured of the East. The thought of India fascinated her ».

It is to be expected that Strachey would attach to Victoria different political titles as he portrayed her through the years and the evolution of her reign. The analysed data allows to establish how her changing status in QVB relates to the imperial propaganda discourse in which Strachey engages. The common denominator among all her titles is Strachey's attempt to build for Victoria a well-respected matriarchal female identity, with which her subjects could identify. This approach is already evident in

example (6), which portrays a quarrel between Victoria and Albert where Victoria acknowledges her role as a wife. Such an identification also creates contact with the addressee, which is achieved through a positively marked evaluative vocabulary designed to arouse the attention and trust of the reader (Karamova et al. 2019).

Through her first title *Princess Victoria*, Victoria is portrayed as a modest person, which already reflects well on the domestic female identity that Strachey is attempting to build. Once Victoria has reached the title of *Queen Victoria*, Strachey continues to depict her as a positive figure, directly contrasted with her uncles who are *nasty old men*. Furthermore, Strachey portrays Victoria as mother to her people as can be observed in example (5) – in which he reports Victoria’s own sentiments “I feel as if these were my own children” – and in example (12) “The Queen was hailed at once as the mother of her people and as the embodied symbol of their imperial greatness “. Therefore, the female monarch is represented as an extension of family life in which Victoria controls the empire and the colony like a mother controls her house and children. By her last title *Empress of India*, it can be inferred that India is viewed as an extension of the British homeland to be controlled by the empress who is in control of the country, just like, as a woman, she is granted dominion over the domestic duty of the house. Since the Queen, mother to her people, embodies the symbol of imperial greatness, it is possible to observe MacKenzie (1990)’s claim, which places reverence for the monarch not only as closely bound up with the monarch’s imperial role, but also as one of the elements of the new imperialism. Thus, throughout Victoria’s changing political status in QVB, Strachey contributes to propaganda discourse by delineating for Victoria a constant domestic female identity with which the readers could identify with, and revere, even after her death.

Victoria’s positive reputation as mother to her people, and her portrayal under the lens of a matriarchal governance, were also constructed through Strachey’s own innovative techniques as a new biographer, which focused on personality and anecdotes (Thirriard 2021). Indeed, Victoria’s final triumph as mother to her people is also built through anecdotes that not only highlight her success, but also her failures, thus distancing Strachey from the earlier Victorian unidimensional biographers, centred exclusively on hero-worshipping (Atkinson 2010). Example (12) depicts Victoria’s triumph by stating that “In that triumphant hour the last remaining traces of past antipathies and past disagreements were altogether swept away”, thus employing anecdotes to raise the character of the queen. However, as implied by “traces of past antipathies and past disagreements”, Strachey

does not hesitate to utilise anecdotes to depict Victoria's fiascos, as can also be observed in example (3) in reference to her failing reign during the 1870s. In addition to her failures, Strachey also portrays Victoria in common daily-life episodes as can be observed in example (6), which narrates an argument with her husband where Victoria, to solve the argument, seems to acknowledge her much common role of a wife.

Hence, Strachey critically deconstructed Victoria's reputation, humanizing her figure as that of a mortal woman who was also capable of mistakes and failures, only to then raise said reputation again through her virtues as a mother to the country. Queen Victoria is not the perfect hero, but rather a woman attempting to the best of her ability to uphold her domestic duties, not only in the home but to the country, an approach that draws away from the Victorian notion of hero-worship with its consequent moralistic image of the self (Thirriard 2021). It is, then, through anecdotes and the deconstruction, and consequent rebuilding, of her reputation that Strachey establishes his framework for a kind of imperialism characterised by a matriarchal governance and by Victoria's domestic identity, which then contributes to propaganda discourse by allowing his readers to identify with that domestic identity and revere the ruler as mother to her people.

7. Concluding remarks

To conclude, it can surely be stated that Strachey contributed to colonial propaganda despite the apparent contradiction with his anti-militaristic views by the use of specific keywords. For instance, the keyword *empire* refers to geographical vastness and space, while its concordances refer to the semantic sphere of constitutional, legislative and legal structure. Furthermore, the keyword *British* collocates with *constitution*, thus underscoring British superiority in terms of legislative and political power and it encodes propaganda discourse by legitimising British dominion over the colonies.

Repeated reference to white British superiority is represented by the collocation and concordances of the cluster *Empress of India* which clearly indicates Victoria's colonial possession that she actually ruled from a distance. The keyword *colony* and its collocations with India and lexical items suggesting subservience reinforce the notion of submission to the "superior" white motherland (England). This demonstrates that, although Strachey distanced himself from Victorian hero-worship and militarism, he still adhered to British superiority as suggested by the collocations of

the keyword *civilised*, forming the concordance *civilised world*, that can be considered part of propaganda discourse relating to white British superiority. It is also yet another indicator that, despite his anti-militaristic views, Strachey reinforces the Victorian imperialist belief that Britain was responsible for spreading progress and civilisation to those deemed uncivilised.

Regarding the relationship between Victoria's changing political status and propaganda discourse, as also observed in the qualitative analysis, Strachey consistently portrays Victoria throughout the years under the lens of a matriarchal governance. As indicated by MacKenzie (1990), reverence for the monarch, closely bound up with the monarch's imperial role, is one of the elements of the new imperialism together with militarism and hero worship. Strachey represents the female monarch as the centre of family life, extending her influence over the empire as if it was just an extension of her family. Since women are granted dominion and management over the domestic sphere, as can be inferred by the use of the cluster *Empress of India*, India itself is viewed as an extension of the British homeland to be dominated even by a woman such as Queen Victoria. Hence, throughout Victoria's changing political status, Strachey still contributes to propaganda discourse by allowing his male and female readership alike to identify and support this extension of Victoria's domestic female identity. This identity was constructed through Strachey's new way of writing biographies, focused on personalities and anecdotes, which allowed him to play with Victoria's reputation to establish and promote his framework of an imperialism based on a matriarchal governance. QVB is therefore part of the ideological mood of the time, proving how even the Bloomsbury intelligentsia was not insensitive to the new imperial nationalism which dominated British society.

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“The mask is off at last!”: Propaganda discourse in the Irish Civil War

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ABSTRACT

Propaganda has generated sustained scholarly interest over the past few decades. While, however, historical research and argumentation studies on propaganda tend to fall short of in-depth examinations of discourse against the backdrop of a sound data base, this paper focuses on the discourse of propaganda through a comparative study of two well-known propaganda sheets from the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). Based on the *ICW_Corpus* designed for the project, the main discourse strategies are identified through which the (respective) enemy and their actions were represented, their moral credibility was questioned and, vice-versa, how the actions of the respective in-group were both justified and/or openly advocated as the appropriate ones for the country. Findings show that *Poblacht na hÉireann* and *The Free State* are closely comparable in using discourse to get the Irish people to endorse the aims and policies of a specific group or faction, by ensuring compliance with the actions of the group itself.

Keywords: propaganda, Ireland, Civil War, discourse strategies, argumentation.

1. Introduction

Propaganda has generated sustained scholarly interest over the past few decades (Zienkowski 2021; Wodak 2022). At the outset, a number of works conceptualise it as a misleading and manipulative form of communication. Thus, it has been defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett – O’Donnell 2015: 3) and, similarly, “the use of persuasive information to

manipulate a target audience into a behaviour desired by the propagandist" (Wanless – Berk 2020: 86). Definitions such as these share a lot of common ground. First of all, they shed light on propaganda as a highly deceptive practice. Secondly, they reiterate the point that propaganda is inherently goal-directed, because it is specifically aimed to trigger a reaction advancing the propagandist's interests.

From the perspective of argumentation theory, Walton (1997) disputes that every argument used in propaganda should be viewed as critically defective and of little (or no) argumentative value. He agrees, however, that propaganda implies using argumentation in a way that is in principle not geared towards uncovering the truth of a matter: accordingly, while arguments put forward in this context are not necessarily fallacious, care should be taken to identify any dialectical shifts behind their use. At the outset, Walton (1997: 394) sees propaganda as an instance of persuasion dialogue, where "the proponent's goal is to use the commitments of the respondent as premises in order to persuade the respondent to also become committed to some particular proposition he previously had doubts about accepting". In this vein, the ultimate aim of propaganda is to lead respondents to follow a certain course of action and eventually act, or to consent to and assist in a particular policy.

Propaganda, Walton (1997: 400) further argues, "is most visible and has been most studied as used in war. In time of war, the participants become caught up in an emotional attitude of hate and bitterness" that hardly ever gets people to consider and weigh up evidence from both sides of an issue. Not for nothing does Sevillano's (2009) study of propaganda focus on a dark period, namely the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In his research on Spanish newspapers from both sides of the conflict, Sevillano (2009) notes that journalists often engaged in stereotypical representations of the enemy in order to undermine their moral credibility and vilify their character as criminal and inhuman. Railing against Republicans, Spanish nationalists therefore laid the foundations of a narrative through which these could be excluded from the national community on the grounds of their subservient role with respect to Soviet interference in the country's affairs.

Sevillano (2009) draws on a wide range of contemporary materials that enable him to discern consistent patterns in the stigma attached to "red" enemies in Franco's Spain. As a historian, nonetheless, he is less interested in the discourse of Spanish propaganda sheets than a major historical reconstruction of the Civil War itself. Likewise, Walton's (1997) investigation of the distinctive characteristics of propaganda is thorough and provides

a solid basis for a more systematic analysis of discourse features underlying propaganda machines. Insightful though it is, the author's reading of propaganda results in no in-depth examination of it at the level of regularity in terms of discourse strategies against the backdrop of a sound data base.

In an attempt to bridge such gaps in knowledge, this research focuses on the discourse of propaganda, which is unveiled through a comparative study of two well-known propaganda sheets of the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). For this purpose, the rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 briefly outlines the historical background of the war with a view to explaining the rationale behind this work. In Section 3, corpus design criteria are discussed, and the methodological tools are introduced: this will allow for a presentation of the dataset as well as a preliminary review of the procedure through which the data were studied. Section 4 then presents the findings of the study, which are eventually discussed in the light of the relevant literature in Section 5.

2. "...a policy of wanton destruction": The Irish Civil War

In the early hours of 6 December 1921, the British and Irish delegations who had entered into formal negotiations after two-and-a-half years of war between Britain and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) signed what became known as the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Although the efforts and ambitions of Irish nationalists were to be thwarted by the British Government's objection to granting Ireland Republican status, the Treaty gave 26 of the country's 32 counties substantial internal autonomy under the name "Irish Free State". This was no mean achievement because it afforded the Irish people an unprecedented opportunity to run their own affairs to a degree that was far greater than would have been the case under the Home Rule settlement produced by the British Parliament in September 1913.

The Treaty, however, contained the seeds of discord. To begin with, the Articles of Agreement required members of the prospective Irish Parliament to swear allegiance to both the Free State Constitution and the British Monarchy, "in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations". In addition, the Treaty conferred on Northern Ireland the right to opt out, which it did soon after the Free State was formally established (Mohr 2023). As a result, the conditions were created for the partition of the island of Ireland, which continues to this day.

On these grounds, both the IRA and *Sinn Féin*, its political counterpart, split down the middle. On the one hand, those who supported the Treaty saw it as a stepping stone to full Independence to be achieved through peaceful constitutional means. On the other hand, those who objected to the Treaty viewed it as a sell-out, the oath of allegiance and partition betraying the Republican ideals behind the Easter Rising (1916) and the War of Independence (1919-1921). The Treaty was ratified by *Dáil Éireann* (the Irish Parliament) and subsequently carried by popular vote. As a result of the election of 16 June 1922, the Provisional Government claimed a mandate to implement the Treaty and the Catholic Hierarchy strongly backed the Government (Ferriter 2005).

When “the anti-treatyites rejected majority rule as a basis for adjudicating the treaty issue” (Kissane 2020: 26), the prospect of Civil War became more immediate. The war effectively broke out in late-June 1922 as the anti-Treaty IRA was confronted by the new Free State Army, which sought to regain control of the Four Courts building seized by Republicans. After their campaign in the Capital failed, anti-Treaty forces retreated to the countryside, notably behind the imaginary line between Limerick and Waterford. Not only had the IRA “made a mistake by leaving Dublin in the hands of their enemies, thereby allowing the Provisional Government to present itself as the lawful government in overall control of the situation” (Kissane 2021: 50). The landing of Government troops in Counties Mayo, Kerry and Cork also enabled the Army to establish entry points behind the Limerick-Waterford line, which would in due course cut IRA brigades in the south-west, south and north-west off from one another. Benefitting as they did from a constant supply of arms and ammunition from Britain, the Army swept to an outright victory in the war’s conventional phase, although the conflict was to drag on until the spring of 1923. After claiming the lives of about 1,300 Irish people, the Civil War was brought to a close by the anti-Treaty IRA’s unilateral ceasefire on 24 April 1923.

The Civil War has been thoroughly analysed from a variety of angles. These include military strategy (Kissane 2021), a comparison with similar conflicts in Europe (e.g., Kissane 2020 on a parallel between the Irish and Finnish civil wars), or, more recently, gender-based violence (Connolly 2019; Clark 2020). At the same time, while historical research has raised the public’s awareness of the role of propaganda during the War (O’Brien 2017; McCarthy 2020; Ferriter 2021), the idea of investigating propaganda from both sides of the Civil-War divide (“Free Staters” as opposed to “Irregulars”, as they were often referred to by the pro-Government press) from a discourse

perspective is novel and was a strong motivation for this research. The next section is intended to lay down corpus-design criteria and describe the methodological approach adopted in the study.

3. Materials and methods

The study was based on the *ICW_Corpus*, a small collection of 116 news texts compiled for the project from two propaganda sheets published during the Civil War. As such, the corpus is subdivided into two sections: the first one includes 69 texts from the Southern edition of *Poblacht na hÉireann* (‘Republic of Ireland’), a prominent anti-Treaty news outlet; the second encompasses 47 texts from *The Free State*, a pro-Treaty newspaper with a large circulation (Gandon 1985). All texts were extracted from the Irish Newspaper Archive (INA), the largest most up-to-date collection of news texts from the island of Ireland (Mazzi 2019, 2020). The Archive was searched according to the following criteria. First of all, *Poblacht na hÉireann* (PE) was researched by using “Provisional (Government)”, “Free State” and “Treaty” as search words, while texts from *The Free State* (FS) were retrieved through the search terms “Republican”, “Irregular” and “rebel(s)”. These terms were selected in order to produce an output of texts which, for each newspaper, could bring insights into how the enemy, their actions and possibly their mind set were represented. Secondly, the Archive was searched between June 1922, when the Civil War broke out, and 31 December 1922, for the purpose of covering the period where violence from both sides was at its most extreme.

The INA’s search engine displayed a series of texts (or whole newspaper pages) ranked through a relevance coefficient. The first 50 items on the list were individually accessed for the purpose of including the most relevant in the respective section of the corpus. With the exception of very few items that did not in fact meet the search criteria – i.e., news texts that were hardly legible or limited to a short headline with no text to follow – all items were eligible for inclusion. The reason why the corpus section from *Poblacht na hÉireann* is larger than that from *The Free State* is that the pages from PE often included more than one piece, in contrast to FS where most items lay in individual texts. Nonetheless, the corpus strikes a fine balance between the two newspapers in that the texts from *The Free State* are on average longer than those from *Poblacht na hÉireann*.

From a methodological point of view, the study implemented a qualitative approach. Jackson et al. (2007: 23) refer to “qualitative enquiry”

as research encompassing “all forms of social enquiry that rely primarily on non-numeric data in the form of words, including all types of textual analyses such as content, conversation, discourse, and narrative analyses”. It is significant that, among the types of research they associate with the concept of qualitative enquiry, the authors also feature discourse analysis, which they describe as “a way for examining language as it is used in specific contexts [...], highlighting the practices that comprise the ideologies, attitudes, ideas, and courses of action that systematically constitute the subjects and objects of which people speak” (Jackson et al. 2007: 24). As far as this study is concerned, the emphasis was not so much on pre-determined sets of language tools such as word forms or phraseology: in fact, the idea was to design a small corpus allowing for a more fine-grained analysis and greater appreciation of news discourse in the historical context under investigation. Accordingly, the “analysis was based on a close reading of the texts, not a key word search” (Mueller et al. 2019: 3).

In more detail, the research was aimed at identifying patterns in terms of the discourse strategies (Mazzi 2022) through which the enemy and their actions were represented, their moral credibility was questioned and, vice-versa, how the actions of the respective in-group were both justified and/or openly advocated as the appropriate ones for the country. This was meant to make a contribution to providing a firmer empirical base for Walton’s (1997: 396-400) comprehensive overview of propaganda characteristics.

These include, first of all, the dialogue structure associated by the author with propaganda discourse. At the outset, Walton (1997: 396) postulates that propaganda takes the form of discourse between two participants. One of these, called the “proponent”, is the sender of the message: whether an individual speaker or, as in our case, a writer, the proponent tends to communicate on a broader agency or organised group’s behalf. The other participant is known as the “respondent”, whom Walton (1997) describes as a mass audience of people.

Walton (1997: 397) further argues that “propaganda is essentially goal-directed as a type of dialogue exchange. The proponent’s goal is to get the respondent to carry out a particular action or to support a particular policy for action”. In this context, the discourse of propaganda provides multiple instances of one-sided argumentation, along with the use of emotively charged words and phrases.

One-sided argumentation, to begin with, can be observed where partisan argumentation is deployed by propagandists “to advocate one side of the issue, and to present the arguments in favour of that side as strongly

as possible" (Walton 1997: 398). In other words, far from being "an attempt to rationally deliberate on the wisdom or prudence of a course of action" (Walton 1997: 398), propaganda by definition precludes the possibility of "looking at all the alternatives and weighing them judiciously or fairly". An "essential part of all propaganda", Walton (1997: 399) finally notes, "is the use of emotively charged words and phrases that make the advocated viewpoint take on a highly positive coloration, and any opposed viewpoint take on a highly negative coloration".

In the upcoming section, Walton's categories are used as an entry point to approach the texts in the *ICW_Corpus* and identify the defining traits of the discourse of propaganda from the two sides of the Civil War.

4. Propaganda of this kind is, of course, errant hypocrisy...": Discourse strategies of propaganda in *Poblacht na hÉireann* and *The Free State*

Following Walton's model of dialogue structure for propaganda discourse, the two news outlets in the *ICW_Corpus* undoubtedly act as proponents. While the Irish people are the intended respondents targeted by the respective propaganda message, data indicate that PE and FS writers can also be identified as each other's respondents. This is typically the case when the two newspapers ostensibly respond to each other in relation to key issues on the Civil War agenda. For a start, an egregious example is shown by the passages where the sensitive question of the treatment of respective prisoners is discussed. In (1),¹ *Poblacht na hÉireann* describes the situation in Free State gaols as "scandalous", with prisoners being "beaten, kicked and threatened with death", while priests' decision to absolve them appeared to be subordinated to their pledge never to take arms again.

- (1) The treatment of prisoners in the Free State Gaols is still scandalous. Complaints pour in from everywhere – Dublin, Maryborough, Kilkenny, Waterford, Galway. A prisoner in Portobello writes that on the night of the 12th five prisoners in the guard room were beaten, kicked and threatened with death. A similar report comes from Wellington Barracks, where C.I.D. men have tried to extort information by brutal

¹ For each of the numbered examples, the source is reported in brackets at the end of the passage (PE for *Poblacht na hÉireann* and FS for *The Free State*). Wherever present, the headline of each piece is also reported.

violence. Priests frequently refuse to give Absolution unless prisoners sign the form promising never to take arms again. [...] The food itself is as bad as before, the bedding filthy and the sanitary conditions abominable. (PE, Untitled)

In (2), on the other hand, *The Free State* is adamant that prisoners were treated with dignity: not only were they supplied with cutlery and anything they needed to rest properly (“mattress, pillow and three blankets”), but they had “no lack of fresh air” and were entitled to receive as many parcels as they wished:

- (2) The prisoners are supplied with knife, fork, spoon, plate and mug. Their bedding consists of a mattress, pillow and three blankets, and each has soap and a towel. Two prisoners occupy each cell, and the cell doors are never closed. The doors leading to the recreation grounds are open all day, so that they have no lack of fresh air. They are allowed one letter in and one letter out per week. They can have as many parcels as are sent to them, and their own representatives are present when these are examined by the censor. (FS, “The Mountjoy prisoners. The truth of their case”)

The fact that the Civil War was also a conflict of opinion is even more apparent from the tendency of the two newspapers to flatly deny each other’s claims. Thus, while *The Free State* averred that the Army should be acknowledged “to carry out the will of the Irish people” (“Ireland’s best. A tribute to the Dublin Guards”), *Poblacht na hÉireann* retorted that “it was not the Will of the People, but the Will of Churchill which triumphed” (“Another vital disclosure”), the British Government sanctioning the Free State Constitution by checking on its consistency with the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Similarly, PE referred to the anti-Treaty IRA as “the men who stood true to the Republic”, those who “believed what they said, who meant what they swore, and who will never lay down their arms while the King of England is allowed to claim allegiance and a vote in the Irish Parliament” (“Much ado about nothing”). Conversely, FS counterargued that theirs “is not a war for the Republic; it is a rebellion against the Treaty. It is not holy; it is criminal. It is not just; it is unjustifiable” (Untitled). Throughout passages of this kind, one frequently comes across a sentence structure of the kind “This/it is not *x*, it is *y*”, as we have just seen.

With the Irish people as the respondent, the two newspapers went to considerable lengths to garner support for the policy promoted by the

respective side. This was achieved at two levels: first, by shedding good light on one's own actions; secondly, by discrediting the enemies' policy. On the one hand, PE presented IRA fighters as "gallant Republicans" ("War news") whose manoeuvres to assault and recapture places or buildings could be accounted for as "a gallant exploit" (Untitled) worthy of those remaining loyal to the Republic. Moreover, the paper often accused Free Staters of deliberately turning Ireland into "a reign of terror" ("Looting in Cork City"), whereby as "they hold destruction necessary, the Free State troops relentlessly destroy" (Untitled).

On the other hand, endorsing as it did those obeying the will of the people, FS did more than just treat anti-treatyites as "prisoners of war", "despite their treachery" ("Treachery of the Irregulars"). In fact, the Free State's policy as enforced by men such as General Mulcahy, Minister for Defence of the Provisional Government, was construed as one that "restored order, established the reign of law, and reduced to submission the internal enemies of the Free State" ("The ways and means of freedom"). At the same time, die-hard Republicans were invariably blamed for a policy variously described as "a policy of wanton destruction" ("A word for every Irishman") or "a systematic programme of wanton destruction" ("The Mountjoy prisoners. The truth of their case"), "devoted to wrecking Ireland's facilities for an important place in international commerce" ("Sinister activities") and whose "object" it was to have "as many as possible of the civilian population killed" ("Tactics of the Irregulars").

Going back to Walton's conceptualisation of the one-sided nature of propaganda (see Section 3), nowhere is Irish Civil War propaganda's one-sidedness more evident than in the several passages where writers from both news outlets in the corpus exposed what they viewed as each other's mendacity. Hence, readers were warned by *Poblacht na hÉireann* that the Free State press published reports about "imaginary 'great captures' and 'many killed and wounded'" (Untitled), stories that were "wholly fictitious" ("Murder!"), "grotesque accounts [...] deliberately and officially concocted for propagandist purposes" (Untitled), and "vague statements" ("The Ballivourney victory!"). Likewise, *The Free State* was persistent in drawing the public's attention to the anti-Treaty press as "removed from facts" ("The problem of the Irregular") or, at best, "errant hypocrisy" ("Hypocrisy. The Irregulars' pretence"), publishing nothing other than "fantastic accounts" and "circumstantial stories" ("Notes. On Irregular propaganda in Munster"), or even "excuses" ("Civilians as combatants") of all sorts.

The extensive use of one-sided argumentation should be seen as going hand in hand with a notion of propaganda as discourse justified by

results. As Walton (1997: 398) suggests, “propaganda as a socially organized activity is justified by the results it is supposed to achieve”: more specifically, propaganda is recurrently justified “by citing a danger to the group, and then stressing that the adoption of a particular point of view is needed to combat or guard against that danger. Such a justification balances the costs of engaging in one-sided or even deceptive argumentation against the danger or loss of life”. *Poblacht na hÉireann* thus articulated the argument that anti-Treatyite actions were not only motivated by consistency with the Republican ideal (as opposed to the Treaty as a sell-out), but also justified by the need to react to the brutality of the Free State Army as well as to respond to the arbitrary powers wielded by Free State authorities more generally, as in examples (3) and (4) below:

- (3) They [the Free Staters] have copied, and even exceeded, the crimes of the Black and Tans: they, too, have their murder gang; they, too, torture their prisoners, and shoot them while in custody. (PE, “A contrast”)
- (4) Horrified juries, mostly Free Staters, have brought in verdicts of wilful murder on evidence which admitted of no other verdict for honest men. Following the example of their English masters in a similar position after the murder of Tomas MacCurtain, the “military authorities” have now abolished Coroners’ Inquests, and the usurping Partition Parliament have passed a resolution legalising the murders and have given themselves power to authorise still more. (PE, “The Murder Bill”)

In (3), attention is drawn to the putative callousness of Free State troops, whose methods were said to remind people of the random violence of the Black and Tans, the constables notoriously recruited into the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) as reinforcements during the War of Independence. In (4), in addition, emphasis is laid on the dubious legality of the verdicts returned by Free State courts, along with the abolition of Coroners’ inquests, which the newspaper read in conjunction with recent legislation as licence to murder.

In contrast, *The Free State* justified the Provisional Government and Army’s zeal in the restoration of order and the submission of internal enemies with a twofold strategy. To begin with, the danger posed by Republicans was illustrated with examples of their senseless violence and extreme treachery, as in (5) below:

- (5) The main position occupied by the Irregulars was Brittas Lodge and the troops closed in around this point, and when quite close to it poured

rapid fire upon the buildings. Soon a white flag was seen fluttering from a window and the National soldiers were given the order to cease fire [...]. The troops then moved into the farmyard and were fired upon from several points, including the building from which the White Flag had been flown. Two National soldiers were killed after the White Flag had been put up. (FS, "Treachery of the Irregulars")

In this passage, a report is given of an incident between Free State soldiers and anti-treatyite Irregulars in Brittas, Co. Dublin. Soon after the building was shelled where Republicans had taken shelter, so the report goes, a white flag was waved by the IRA fighters in Brittas Lodge. As the National soldiers made their way into the courtyard, they were fired upon despite the white flag, two of them being fatally injured. Secondly, *The Free State* resorted to a subtler tactic to highlight the dangers presented by the Irregulars. In more than one piece, FS propagandists discussed the Republican mind set, as can be appreciated from the excerpts in (6) and (7):

- (6) Being presumably idealists they would think less of personalities than the general weakness of the immediate result, than the trend of national development. [...] National greatness is measured by national strength, and I have tried in vain to discover the true relationship between the preaching of idealism and the practice of wholesale destruction. [...] Passion uncontrolled by reason can produce mental derangement in individuals; it can produce similar results in groups and movements. (FS, "The 'Irregular' Mind")
- (7) In all the developments that have taken place since the approval of the Treaty, the Irregulars have shown a singular incapacity to see their own position. They have for a long time – perhaps since the beginning – intended to destroy the Treaty by armed action. [...] It is obvious how mistaken they were. Public opinion has never swung towards them. It is every day hardening against them. [...] The Irregulars miscalculated entirely when they thought an open insurrection against an Irish Government would affect the people in the same way as an Insurrection against a foreign Government. Just as they despised the will of the people, they despised the intelligence of the people. (FS, Untitled)

The aim of both passages was arguably to demonstrate the inconsistency between the ideals they professed and the policy of wanton destruction they pursued ("I have tried in vain to discover any true relation between

the preaching of idealism and the practice of wholesale destruction" in example 6), as well as the wholly unsustainable position of men and women incapable of estimating the potentially devastating effects of their utter lack of self-restraint (cf. "a singular incapacity to see their own position" and "the Irregulars miscalculated entirely" in example 7).

Evidence of the prototypical one-sidedness of propaganda discourse finally comes from the liberal use of emotively charged words and phrases. This was undoubtedly the case with Civil War propaganda in Ireland. Of the discourse strategies established in the *ICW_Corpus*, two appear to have been comprehensively adopted. The first is name-calling (Gustainis 1990), namely the use of offensive names or pejorative terms to arouse the respondent's indignation in order to win an argument more easily. In an attempt to draw the Irish people's condemnation for the Free State political and military authorities, therefore, *Poblacht na hÉireann* referred to *Dáil Éireann* as "Churchill's Provisional Parliament" (Untitled). At the same time, the Anglo-Irish Treaty became "that act of treachery to the Republic" ("Much ado about Nothing") and the Free State Army turned into "murder gangs" ("The Murder Bill") at the behest of W. T. Cosgrave, Chairman of the Provisional Government, and Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence. Furthermore, while the State's new military courts were soon dismissed as "Mulcahy's licensed-to-murder courts" ("Impartial Judges!"), National soldiers were labelled as "ignorant lads [...] equipped with rifle and bayonet to hound down old comrades" (Untitled). In *The Free State*, on the other hand, the main focus was predictably on the anti-Treaty IRA themselves: as one goes through the corpus texts, Republicans are referred to as "the rebels, or irregulars" ("Prolonging the Irish agony"), "the destroyers of the hope of a Republic" ("What is the use? Republican Propaganda"), "the Outlaws" as well as "our undisciplined friends [...] posing as Republicans" (Untitled), and "the fomenters of the Reign of Terror and anarchy" ("War notes").

The second strategy also involved using emotively charged language through which the enemy's views and indeed their deeds could take on a negative coloration. In particular, it is interesting to note that the two sides to the war almost systematically accused each other of implementing the same methods as the British would use in the past. In his theorisation on propaganda as discourse, Oddo (2018) notes that propaganda is successfully used, borrowed and recycled through operations of recontextualisation marked by a high degree of intertextuality. The latter is viewed by Oddo (2018: 21) less as a static relationship between texts than as a communicative

process, so that "when two texts share the same meanings, it is because the person who designed the second text recontextualized a meaning from the first – knowingly or unknowingly extracting some element from the 'original' and repurposing it in a new context". In the *ICW_Corpus*, the recontextualisation of meanings from previous discourse, namely that from the War of Independence, seems by all means deliberate. More specifically, the decision to brush and repackage anti-British rhetoric in order to attack the (new) enemy was certainly aimed at breeding the Irish people's resentment against them. Following Oddo, therefore, information about the British system in force in Ireland until recently was repurposed in order to fit the narrative that the enemy was distinctively anti-national in outlook. In *Poblacht na hÉireann*, references to the British system being reintroduced were extensive, as shown in example (8):

- (8) The proceedings were, of course, like that of the British during the Terror, and following the same example. Inquests will probably be abolished under the R.O.I. Act. While Harry Boland's assassination unarmed in bed is shielded, two packed Coroner's juries in the country have brought in verdicts of murder against Republican Soldiers engaged in an ordinary fight. The British system again. (PE, "Faked Inquests")

The passage is taken from an article decrying the inquests on the death of prominent nationalists such as Harry Boland and Cathal Brugha. These were defined as "a shocking farce", held as they had been by "servile" coroners and juries packed with Free Staters. In the final part of the text, the proceedings are discredited as following the example set by the British authorities not long before ("The British system again"). Elsewhere (example 9), the journalists' claims were substantiated by clear hints that the British Government was siding with the Provisional Government, as they did in facilitating the naval landing of troops in the west and south-west of the country, which resulted in IRA brigades being cut off from one another (Section 2):

- (9) The Free State penetration of the South and West, leading to the capture of cities and towns, would have been impossible without the command of the sea and the landing of troops at a large number of points in rear of the Republican Army. These landings were only feasible by the direct co-operation of the British Navy which not only prevented the use of the sea by Republicans, but covered the disembarkation of the armed forces. (PE, "The Treaty Ports")

In *The Free State*, propagandists responded with comparable fervour. In more detail, they tapped into the popular feeling of revulsion against the British as a deep reservoir from which to bring Irregulars into disrepute. This was achieved at various levels, as shown by examples (10) and (11) reported below:

- (10) This policy of starving out the country, of effecting a blockade, was put into operation by the soldiers of Elizabeth and Cromwell. It is the first time that Irishmen have used the weapon on their own country. It failed before, and thanks to the courage of our Army and to the whole-hearted co-operation of the civil population, employers and workers alike, it will continue to fail. (FS, "Civilians as Combatants")
- (11) The diabolical cunning of Major Erskine Childers, D.S.O., should not be under-estimated. He has been a consistent English Imperialist all his life. He is always ready with plausible excuses. Recently in the Dail [sic], he admitted having volunteered and fought under the British flag to destroy the Boer Republics; also to having spied on Germany and helped to bring about the war on Germany [...] pretending to help Ireland to throw off the British yoke [...]. (FS, "Sinister Activities")

In (10), the writer insinuates that the Irregulars' actions were on a par with Queen Elizabeth I and even Cromwell's policies, while elsewhere the nationalist credentials of key figures from the anti-Treaty IRA were questioned, the truth of their imperialist sympathies being fully exposed wherever possible. A prime target was Erskine Childers, formerly secretary of the Irish delegation that negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty, then on the run with the anti-treaty forces in retreat to County Cork and County Kerry. In example (11) Childers, whose English origin was well known, is depicted as "a consistent English Imperialist all his life", a man who had "volunteered and fought under the British flag" and was therefore only "pretending to help Ireland" free itself from "the British yoke".

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study was aimed at identifying patterns in terms of the discourse strategies through which, in the context of Irish Civil-War propaganda, the enemy and their actions were represented, their moral credibility was questioned, and vice-versa, how the actions of the respective in-group

were both justified and/or openly advocated as the appropriate ones for the country. In order to achieve this aim methodically and systematically, Walton’s (1997) framework for the investigation of propaganda as argumentative discourse was employed to provide a sound theoretical basis, which was integrated here with empirical qualitative evidence from a small corpus of propaganda sheets from both sides of the war. The findings presented in Section 4 showed that the two news outlets considered for the project, i.e. *Poblacht na hÉireann* and *The Free State*, are closely comparable in terms of the strategies through which the relevant audience – namely, the Irish people as the mass respondent, following Walton (1997: 398) – is invited to endorse the aims and share the interests and policies of a specific group or faction, by ensuring compliance with the actions being contemplated, undertaken or advocated by the group itself.

The evidence reviewed in the previous section chimes with influential work from other approaches to the interplay of discourse and manipulation. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, for instance, van Dijk (2006: 369) rightly points out that “the general goals of manipulative discourse are the control of the shared social representations of groups of people because these social beliefs in turn control what people do and say in many situations and over a relatively long period”. Indeed, there is close similarity between the corpus data analysed here and a great deal of the “structures of many discourse levels” postulated by van Dijk (2006: 373) to be inherent in manipulative discourse: among others, “overall interaction strategies” associated with positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, “semantic macro-structure” aimed at (de-)emphasising negative/positive topics about Us/Them, and lexicon with a view to the selection of “positive words for Us, negative words for Them”.

From a broader argumentative viewpoint, there is truth in Walton’s (1997: 402) view that propaganda is neither necessarily nor invariably “dishonest, deceptive, or against the aims of rational discussion”. Going back to the results from the present research, accounts about the “scandalous” treatment of prisoners in Free State Gaols (example 1 above) may well have been accurate with respect to a number of prisons (Murphy 2017), while the contention that prisoners were treated fairly may at times have been hard to dispute in relation to Mountjoy prison (example 2, but cf. McInerney 2023). Likewise, there is no denying Erskine Childers’s own (and indeed his family’s) former allegiance had lain with Unionism and the British Empire (example 11). As an instrumental type of discourse that is not directed towards the truth of a matter, nonetheless, propaganda “selects out the facts

it presents to an audience, and although it may present some true statements, it may ignore other true and relevant statements that lack propaganda value, even though they are relevant, in a logical sense" (Walton 1997: 402).

With reference to the above, accordingly, *Poblacht na hÉireann* concentrated on the cruelty inflicted to Republican inmates in other gaols across the country as it best helped it push its own anti-Treaty agenda. Similarly, *The Free State* might have been fully aware of the whole story of Childers's involvement in the nationalist movement. After all, this was a man who both kept calm dignity in politely talking to the firing squad that would execute him in late-November 1922, and showed great humanity in insisting with his son that even after and despite his own death, the best way to treasure his father's memory would be to promote reconciliation within Ireland (Ferriter 2021). Nevertheless, *The Free State* only seemed to pursue the line that, as a former Imperialist, all Childers was committed to was the backstabbing of Independent Ireland, in keeping with the paper's anti-Irregular campaign.

While historical research can (and no doubt will continue to) make a contribution to ascertaining facts and discerning truths, the preliminary findings presented here could be fruitfully integrated with more research into how meanings are recontextualised and intertextually repurposed in propaganda discourse (Oddo 2018). In particular, it would be interesting to see how propagandists selectively and strategically drew on Irish history in order to persuasively define (or redefine, as the case may be) the meaning of landmark events such as the Easter Rising (1916) or the highly contentious issue of what a 'Republic' was supposed to be (Mazzi 2024). Such an analysis would help shed light on the rhetorical strategies through which the two sides of the Civil War claimed the heritage of Ireland's "old tradition of nationhood", as celebrated by the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in the eventful days of 1916.

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Propaganda in *TIME Magazine* – A diachronic corpus-assisted discourse study

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ABSTRACT

While propaganda has been considered an age-old phenomenon, its conceptualisations differ historically and culturally. This contribution explores how the concept of propaganda is constructed in American news discourse, drawing on the *TIME Magazine Corpus* (1923-2006). The study adopts the approach of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies, combining corpus-linguistic methods with the more qualitatively oriented perspectives of (Critical) Discourse Analysis. Bringing together academic perspectives and mass media discourse about propaganda as exemplified by *TIME*, the study delineates key components of propaganda and tests (near-)synonyms, which shape the conceptual field of propaganda. The results indicate that, though negative connotations prevail, the semantic prosody and discourse prosody of propaganda are more variable than often acknowledged in both lay and expert definitions. Quantitative developments show a decreasing usage of the labels investigated in the 21st century, hinting at changing metadiscursive practices in *TIME*.

Keywords: *TIME Magazine*, corpus-assisted discourse studies, conceptual field of propaganda.

1. Introduction

The nature of propaganda has been described as ‘chameleonic’ and difficult to capture (e.g. Liu 2020: 5). The study at hand approaches this slippery concept with a corpus-assisted study of discourse about propaganda in the weekly *TIME Magazine*, which was launched in 1923 and soon became “the most influential newsmagazine in the United States” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*,

s.v. *TIME*). *TIME* has not only set standards for other news publications of this kind, but it is also an important player in reflecting and shaping public discourse.

Drawing on the *TIME Magazine Corpus* (henceforth *TIME*), I focus particularly on the 20th century, which has been described as the ‘age of propaganda’ (Cunningham 2002: 1), and the first decade of the 21st century. As outlined below, this study takes a metalinguistic perspective, investigating propaganda discourse, while the focus is not (or only secondarily) on the propaganda practices employed by the magazine itself.

Section 2 provides more detailed information on data and methods. After that, I will take two steps towards defining the core concept of propaganda: Section 3 draws on academic perspectives and compiles a set of recurring key components in definitions and descriptions of propaganda. Section 4 takes a corpus-assisted approach, using references to *propagand** as access points to conceptualisations of propaganda in *TIME*. This core concept is complemented in section 5 by a range of (near-)synonyms which form the broader conceptual field of propaganda. Sections 6 and 7 provide insights into the diachronic developments of the core term and the related labels. The conclusion in section 8 discusses potential reasons for certain trends, particularly the overall decrease of references to propaganda in *TIME*.

2. Data and methods

The main data for this study is provided by the *TIME* corpus, which covers the period from 1923-2006 and contains ca. 275,000 articles, all in all more than 100 million words. In the analysis, I draw on the free online interface offered by Davies (2007), which has provided the basis for a variety of diachronic corpus-linguistic studies (e.g. Łodej 2021).

This study adopts the approach of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), combining corpus-linguistic methods with the more qualitatively oriented perspectives of (Critical) Discourse Analysis (Ancarno 2020, Partington et al. 2013). The basis is provided by a search of the core term *propagand**, which yields 5,928 hits in *TIME*. Concordance patterns and collocates (within four words on either side of the node) allow for insights into the discursive construction of key components of propaganda. They also function as signposts for the identification of semantically and functionally related labels (cf. Bös 2015).

In addition to these findings and the results provided by the synonym search function in *TIME*, the domain of propaganda is further explored by investigating the use of (near-) synonyms suggested in the Historical Thesaurus of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), *Merriam-Webster Thesaurus* and *Powerthesaurus* (hyperlinked in *TIME*), as well as the word sketch option of the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA, Davies 2008). Testing their use in *TIME* made it possible to identify further potentially relevant labels and refine the corpus-specific set of semantically and functionally related terms. This approach thus helps to shed more light on the semantic prosody of the concept and the discourse prosody of passages dealing with propaganda in *TIME* (cf. Baker et al 2008: 278; Stubbs 2001: 65).

Quantitative developments in the use of *propagand** and related labels in *TIME* are sketched by drawing on the normalised results for the decades provided by the Charts function. For the larger picture, I also draw on the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA, Davies 2010). Qualitative observations rest on the expanded context or, where that proves too limited, the respective articles provided in the archive of *TIME Magazine*.

3. Defining the core concept of propaganda I: Academic perspectives

Used by laypersons in private discourse, news workers in public media discourse, and researchers in different academic fields, across different times and cultures, the term *propaganda* is notoriously fuzzy. Yet, there are some aspects which many (though not all) of the conceptualisations seem to share. Starting out from a non-specialist definition provided in a randomly selected modern dictionary of English, many of these features are already hinted at. The *Macmillan Dictionary* defines *propaganda* as “information, especially false information, that a government or organization spreads in order to influence people’s opinions and beliefs” (s.v. *propaganda*), highlighting the potential lack of accuracy, the institutional frame and the major communicative function of persuasion. Considering these aspects alongside further definitions (such those in the OED; *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Artz 2020; Hyzen 2021; Steinfatt 2017) and the summaries provided by Corner (2007: 674-675), Cunningham (2002: 176-178) and Oddo (2018: 16-21), a common set of key components emerges (see Tab. 1).

Taken together, these key components explain the negative load the term has widely acquired. However, not all of the aspects mentioned have remained uncontested in academic discussions. Particularly the question

whether lying is necessarily a key component of propaganda has long been debated. For example, Oddo (2018: 3) maintains that it is “wrong to assume that propaganda always lies. Some does, but much propaganda is difficult to classify as true or false. [...] Other propaganda appears to be factual”. Cunningham (2002: 13) emphasises that “propaganda and its strategists sometimes lie and distort, but they prefer to use facts and truths as much as possible because it is generally far more effective in convincing others” (see also Ellul’s 1965 classic definition).

Table 1. Key components in conceptualisations of propaganda

Communicative frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – institutional addressors (parties, organisations) – systematic/organised nature – mass mediated practices
Quality and quantity of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – lies – strategic selectivity
Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – covertness
Rhetorical strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – emotionalisation – exaggeration
Purposes and effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – persuasion, manipulation – antidemocratic intentions (serving the addressors, harmful for others)

Likewise, the negative connotation of the term needs qualification. Research on historical developments and culture-specific usages of the term points to neutral and positive connotations of the term, which were not only linked to its original, religious usage in the 17th century, but preserved well into the 20th century. The term started to gain an increasingly negative load in WWI in the Anglo-American context. Yet, *propaganda* retained a positive connotation as an official term for political agitation processes “in contexts where highly defined doctrinal truths [were] advanced” (Corner 2007: 670), e.g. the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, the GDR and China (cf. also Liu 2020: 10). Furthermore, researchers have drawn attention to manifestations of propaganda in areas other than politics, e.g. advertising, religion and education (cf. Steinfatt 2017). Indeed, particularly the nexus of propaganda and marketing has long been under discussion (e.g. McGarry 1958).

Thus, there were attempts to redefine the term in broader, more neutral and less normative ways. For example, Zienkowski (2021: 6) views propaganda as “those multimodal language games where social groups, organizations and networks perform discursive practices that introduce,

reproduce, change and/or disarticulate articulatory practice(s) and discourses with varying degrees of reflexivity". Yet, reconceptualisations of this kind have also been viewed critically:

Such an attempt to provide the term with a value-free, descriptive meaning not only faces the challenge of cancelling its intensive history of negative association, it also risks extending the category too far for its analytic good (Corner 2007: 671),

as it might strongly overlap with other communicative practices.

Concluding, academic sources provide a multi-faceted view on propaganda. Their perspectives will be complemented by those expressed in written mass media discourse, as exemplified by *TIME*, in the next section.

4. Defining the core concept of propaganda II: Corpus-assisted approach

While the label *propaganda* as such is, of course, metalinguistic in nature, denoting certain communicative activities, the focus of this first step in the corpus analysis is on those more or less explicit metalinguistic passages involving the term *propaganda* which allow for basic insights into how the core features of propaganda are discursively constructed in *TIME*. As the examples will show, there is evidence of both the conceptions of the news workers themselves, but also of the people whose voices are represented in the actual news discourse, typically politicians or other public figures, thus reflecting broader hegemonic societal notions. They are complemented by the occasional letter to the editor expressing readers' opinions. In general, it can be assumed that the conceptualisations of propaganda in *TIME* reflect a Western (US) stance, except explicitly indicated otherwise.

In order to elicit relevant data from the corpus, the following concordance patterns proved particularly fruitful, even though they required a certain amount of manual sifting: ADJ *propaganda*, *is (not) propaganda/propaganda is, propagand** N, and coordinated noun phrases (N CONJ *propaganda; propaganda* CONJ N), which are, for example, used to express contrasts between propaganda and other concepts. Additionally, I used the term *propaganda* itself as a collocate of *propagand**. This not only yielded a tautology indicating a certain tacit understanding as to what propaganda is (*Propaganda is propaganda*, 1945/04/30), but also signposted more elaborate metalinguistic passages or even complete articles discussing the nature of propaganda.

4.1 Explicit definitions and metalinguistic negotiations of propaganda

Two of the articles extracted serve as a starting point here, as they provide explicit definitions of the concept which resonate with the key components outlined in section 3. In “What Is Propaganda?” (1923/09/10), *propaganda* is contrasted with *legitimate publicity*. Here, an initial definition foregrounds the veracity and benign purposes of *legitimate publicity*, which is juxtaposed with the persuasive force and one-sided advantages for the addressor in the case of *propaganda* (ex. 1). Then, a second attempt at a definition additionally highlights the element of overt sourcing for the distinction of legitimate publicity from propaganda (ex. 2).

- (1) “**Legitimate publicity**’ is the spreading of truthful information, or facts, about any cause or condition which is of interest or importance to people generally, and not for the pecuniary or other advantage of the person spreading it.

“**Propaganda**’ is the giving out (or hiring of) opinions, arguments, or pleas to induce people generally to believe what some individual, group of individuals or organizations want them to believe, for the pecuniary or other advantage of the individual, group or organization giving out (or hiring) the propaganda. (1923/09/10)

- (2) “Would not a sounder definition be:

“**Legitimate publicity**’ is the spreading of truthful information, or facts, about any cause or condition which is of interest or importance to people generally – provided that it is made plain who is responsible for distributing the information and who is financing its distribution, together, of course, with details as to the amount of money spent and the methods by which it is expended.” (1923/09/10)

Further arguments provided in the article suggest that propaganda might become acceptable when responsibility is taken for the message and discuss the relationship of government and press. This is also an important aspect in “The Great War on Words” (1985/09/09), published almost 60 years later (see extract, ex. 3).

- (3) In the Soviet Union, where ideas, like almost everything else, are controlled by the state, the word is **propaganda**. In the U.S., Government officials prefer to talk of “**public diplomacy**,” a term less offensive to free-speech sensibilities. But however they describe it,

both superpowers are engaged in an all-out war of words and images aimed at winning hearts and minds around the globe.

Propaganda – the methodical spreading of information to influence public opinion – can take many forms, from a government-approved interview in Pravda to a carefully couched answer at a Washington press conference, from a story planted in a foreign newspaper to a State Department white paper. The line between manipulating mass opinion and enunciating policy, between **p.r. posturing** and **legitimate diplomacy**, can be shadowy indeed. Most official declarations, be they from the Kremlin or the White House, have a mixed purpose. (1985/09/09)

This article does not only critically discuss the blurry boundaries of legitimate governmental communication and propaganda, it also draws attention to another problematic issue: the different construal of essentially the same communicative practices in an ‘us vs. them’ perspective, which is also reflected in the use of different labels. Accordingly, *propaganda* is typically employed with regard to opponents’ activities, carrying a clear negative connotation, whereas the use of more neutral terms such as *public relations* is associated with euphemistic self-reference (but see section 5.2).

While this differentiated usage is not only characteristic of Cold War rhetoric, but has also been described as typical of current discourse (e.g. Hyzen 2021: 3480), the use of *propaganda* in reference to systematic mass manipulation performed by the political enemy already emerged during WWI. Propaganda campaigns of the Germans were heavily criticised, while Americans learned only later that the Committee on Public Information had likewise indoctrinated them with propaganda tactics (Oddo 2018: 14), as also critically discussed retrospectively in *TIME*.

4.2 Discursive constructions of basic properties of propaganda

Communicative frame

Further corpus evidence substantiates the key components outlined in Tab. 1. The institutional frame and organised nature of propaganda is, for example, reflected by the frequent use of the compound *propaganda campaign*, with 85 instances the second-most frequent *propagand** N combination, followed by the metaphorical *propaganda machine* (61 tokens, also used in reference to major propagandists), *propaganda ministry* (46 hits) and *propaganda line* (33 instances). Premodifying adjectives such as *political* and *(anti-)religious*

hint at major domains, the list of collocates of *propaganda* at major agents representing parties or organisations.

The hits also allow for some insights into the oscillating connotations of *propaganda*. Whereas it has been claimed that “[f]ollowing the Great War, attempts to reclaim a positive meaning for “propaganda” largely failed” (Oddo 2018: 14), there are, for example, instances from the time of WWII which are used in relatively neutral ways in self-reference. This is illustrated by ex. (4) relating to the *brain of the foreign propaganda division* of the overseas branch of the Office of War Information.

- (4) The board’s job is to sift the vast portfolio of U.S. Government information on domestic and foreign events, pass it on to the operations division in the form of directives that fix the **U.S. propaganda line** for each country. (1942/10/12)

Even examples from the 21st century, such as the extract from a letter to the editor in ex. (5), still display a neutral usage, which in this particular case additionally illustrates the fluid boundaries of political and commercial interests also addressed in attempts at broader definitions outlined in section 3.

- (5) Another possibility is launching a **propaganda campaign**. If every television show had a 30-sec. piece featuring empty U.S. factories, Chinese goods just might stop flying off the shelves. (2005/12/18)

Ex. (5) also refers to one of the important channels of propaganda as mass-mediated practices, *television*. Further *propagand** N combinations, such as *propaganda leaflet(s), pamphlet(s), magazine(s), poster(s), picture(s), play(s), broadcast(s), film(s)* and *movie(s)*, give evidence of the growing array of media formats and channels for the distribution of propaganda. Under the label *gadget propaganda* an even more extensive list of effective carriers of propaganda to be employed by the Office of War Information is spelled out (ex. 6).

- (6) **Gadget Propaganda.** **Propaganda** is also magazines, movies, handbills, leaflets for bombers to drop, soap, matches, shoelaces, games, puzzles, gadgets of all sorts, packaged to carry a message. [...] A leaflet – or a package of matches – is physical evidence that the U.S. is there. (1942/10/12)

Again, *propaganda* is used neutrally here. Thus, the term is not thoroughly negatively connotated, even though it has a negative load in the majority of the cases.

Quality and quantity of information

The data elicited from the corpus provide substantial evidence regarding the deceptive quality of propaganda. Often truth and facts are juxtaposed with propaganda (ex. 7, 8).

- (7) no verbosity, no **propaganda**, no distortion, just the **truth** and **facts** (1923/10/08)
- (8) With his usual mixture of **truth** and **propaganda**, he [Hitler, BB] argued that: [...] (1944/01/10)

Occasionally, premodification by *false* additionally highlights the inaccuracy of propaganda. However, as also indicated in the academic discussions, lying is not necessarily considered an obligatory element of propaganda. In Ex. (9) *TIME* cites a passage from *FORTUNE*, where the role of the democratic press in wartime is discussed. The juxtaposition of censorship and propaganda also addresses both issues of quality and quantity of information, adding yet another component to the intertwined nature of news and propaganda as mass-mediated practices.

- (9) “The one hard and indisputable fact about **censorship** is that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to be said in its favor. It is a deliberate retrogression, an admission of defeat, temporary at least, in the ageless fight for freedom and truth... But whereas the case against censorship is overwhelming, there is a case for **propaganda – good propaganda**, of which the best is the truth... Democracy’s most potent weapon against all-out totalitarian warfare is, in the most practical sense, all-out truth. (1941/06/02)

Here, the term *propaganda* has a positive load and is explicitly linked to truthfulness, which makes propaganda an acceptable practice in democratic contexts.

Sourcing

The aspect of accuracy is closely related to that of sourcing. While subtlety and underhandedness are constructed as elements of successful propaganda (ex. 10, 11) and contrasted with *blatant propaganda*, the notion of *black propaganda* furthermore emphasises the combination of falsehood and covertness (cf. Hyzen 2021: 3487). Ex. (12) makes reference to the internet as the newest medium of not only spreading, but also effectively disguising sources of disinformation.

- (10) The **best propaganda** is always subtle, apparently uncontrolled. (1938/02/23)
- (11) The secret of a **good propaganda agency** is not to be caught **propagandizing**. (1945/06/11)
- (12) This makes the Net a powerful yet dangerous tool, Pavlovsky remarked recently. Through it, he explains, **black propaganda** can easily be “laundered” into “white” press reports.

In contrast, references to *official propaganda* clearly indicate an institutional frame and are typically associated with totalitarian systems.

Rhetorical strategies

Discourse surrounding the search item *propagand** also provides insights into the rhetorical strategies associated with propaganda. Ex. (13) hints at strategies of emotionalisation and their effects; ex. (14) emphasises exaggeration, which is also linked to inaccuracy; and ex. (15) contrasts propagandistic emotionalisation strategies with the plain and concrete nature of a speech by Eisenhower.

- (13) “to counteract the inspired propaganda which has created mass war hysteria throughout the Nation by inflaming the fears and passions of our people.” (1939/08/28)
- (14) they “absorb the most exaggerated and false propaganda” (1950/02/06)
- (15) Eisenhower’s remarks were not particularly eloquent, and invoked no propagandistic emotions: they were in West Point English, basic, clear, specific. (1960/10/03)

Furthermore, premodification by adjectives such as *aggressive* hints not only at the highly emotional, but also methodical and forceful nature of propaganda.

Purposes and effects

Propaganda is often constructed as intentional, e.g. by patterns such as *deliberate propaganda* or *propaganda ploy*, the latter of which also draws attention to the elements of persuasion/manipulation serving the addressor and a tendency towards covertness. A broad range of adjectives expressing more or less explicit moral evaluation further highlights aspects of

manipulation and harmfulness, e.g. *bitter, effective, evil, hostile, inflammatory, malicious, negative, shameless, subversive, vicious, virulent*.

However, there are also combinations with *democratic*, which show once more that the concept was not (yet) necessarily negatively connotated (ex. 16).

- (16) Hitlerian Germany, Fascist Italy and Communist Russia forbid democratic propaganda in their lands. (1938/11/07)
- (17) The official G.I. guide to Germany tells U.S. doughboys how to deal with skeptical Germans. When a German says: "It is all a lie, all democratic propaganda," the G.I.'s officially approved answer is: "Okay, chum, you'll find out soon enough." (1945/10/28)

Yet, while ex. (16) implies that it was acceptable for non-totalitarian systems to have propaganda, which is used neutrally in this representation of the US perspective, the construction could also evoke negative associations, as illustrated by ex. (17), a hypothetical quote by the German enemy insinuating falsehood, which the American G.I. is trained to counter.

Concluding, *TIME* discourse involving the search item *propagand** often corroborates the key components postulated as characteristic of the concept. However, there is also evidence of metalinguistic negotiations of the concept, whose connotations are more variable than frequently assumed. Furthermore, the examples already hint at a rich array of closely related concepts, which will be approached more systematically in the next section.

5. Broadening the perspective: Identifying related concepts

5.1 Compiling an inventory of (near-)synonyms

Going beyond the label *propaganda* itself, this study also considers terms denoting potentially related concepts. For a first categorisation, the Historical Thesaurus of the *OED* serves as a starting point. It classifies *propaganda* (s.v., sense 2, 3) under the headings *the mind* » *will* » *motivation* » *persuasion*. Again, this path highlights the purposes and effects which were carved out as major components of propaganda above. Further, more comprehensive sets of (near-)synonyms are compiled in Tab. 2. They include information from the *Merriam-Webster Thesaurus* and the *Powerthesaurus*, which is hyperlinked by *TIME*, as well as the results of the *COCA* word sketch and *TIME* synonym

search. In line with the CADS approach, the terms suggested were then tested in *TIME*. This resulted in a refined set, which was partly narrowed down and partly extended by further relevant concepts.

Table 2. Overview of potentially relevant (near-)synonyms of *propaganda*¹

Synonyms suggested	Merriam-Webster (top two relevance levels)	Power-thesaurus	COCA word sketch	TIME (=propaganda)	Corpus-assisted compilation
<i>ad(vertising), ad(vertisement)</i>	XX	X	XX	X	w/ modification
<i>agitprop</i>		X			X
<i>announcement</i>	X	X			
<i>ballyhoo</i>	X	X			x
<i>bias</i>					w/ modification
<i>brainwashing</i>		X			X
<i>brochure</i>	X				
<i>buildup</i>	X		X	X	
<i>bulletin</i>	X				
<i>bumf</i>				X	
<i>campaign</i>	X				w/ modification
<i>cant</i>				X	x
<i>circular</i>	X				
<i>communication</i>	X				
<i>communiqué</i>	X				
<i>diplomacy</i>					X
<i>disinformation</i>		X	X	X	X
<i>demagoguery</i>					X
<i>doctrine</i>		X			X
<i>fake news</i>					x
<i>flyer</i>	X				
<i>hoax</i>					x
<i>hoopla</i>			X	X	x
<i>hype</i>		X	X	X	x
<i>information</i>		X	X	X	

¹ In Tab. 2, the (near-)synonyms are represented by nouns. However, the corpus search also included other potential word forms where relevant (e.g. *brainwash**).

indoctrination		X	X	X	X
<i>lies</i>		X			X
<i>literature</i>			X	X	
<i>lobbying</i>					X
<i>manipulation</i>					X
<i>marketing</i>			X	X	
<i>message</i>	X				
misinformation			X	X	X
<i>news management</i>					X
<i>newspeak</i>		X			X
<i>notification</i>	X				
<i>outreach</i>					x
<i>persuasion</i>					w/ modification
<i>plug</i>	X				
<i>populism</i>					X
<i>poster</i>	X				
<i>posting</i>	X				
<i>promo(tion)</i>	X	X			
<i>pronouncement</i>	X				
<i>proselytism, proselytizing</i>		X			X
publicity	X	X	X	X	X
<i>public relations</i>					X
<i>puffery</i>			X	X	x
<i>release</i>	X				
<i>report</i>	X				
<i>rhetoric</i>					X

In Tab. 2, bold type marks (near-)synonyms positioned as highly relevant, as indicated by multiple mentions and/or the respective classification in the sources. Lowercase x signifies terms of minor relevance in *TIME*, with generally low frequencies and/or many false hits. Grey marks the labels excluded from further consideration. This comprises terms which are semantically too broad (e.g. *communication, information*) or too ambiguous (e.g. *plug*). Synonyms such as *ad(vertisement), marketing, promo(tion)* indicate an overlap of political and commercial domains which was also pointed out in

the more comprehensive definitions of propaganda. Some of those broader terms were tested in more detail, but with modifying elements to improve precision (e.g. *political advertising, media bias, political persuasion*), all of which proved relevant, but not particularly frequent. Other terms not considered further are items relating to potential media formats of propaganda, most of which were suggested by the *Merriam-Webster Thesaurus* (e.g. *bulletin, circular*).

5.2 Mapping out the conceptual field of propaganda

Clearly, none of the terms suggested as synonyms in thesauri and academic works and identified in corpus-assisted research are completely identical with *propaganda*. Yet, as Fig. 1 visualises, they can be mapped out in a semantic-functional field which shows that, typically, the terms foreground particular key components of propaganda.

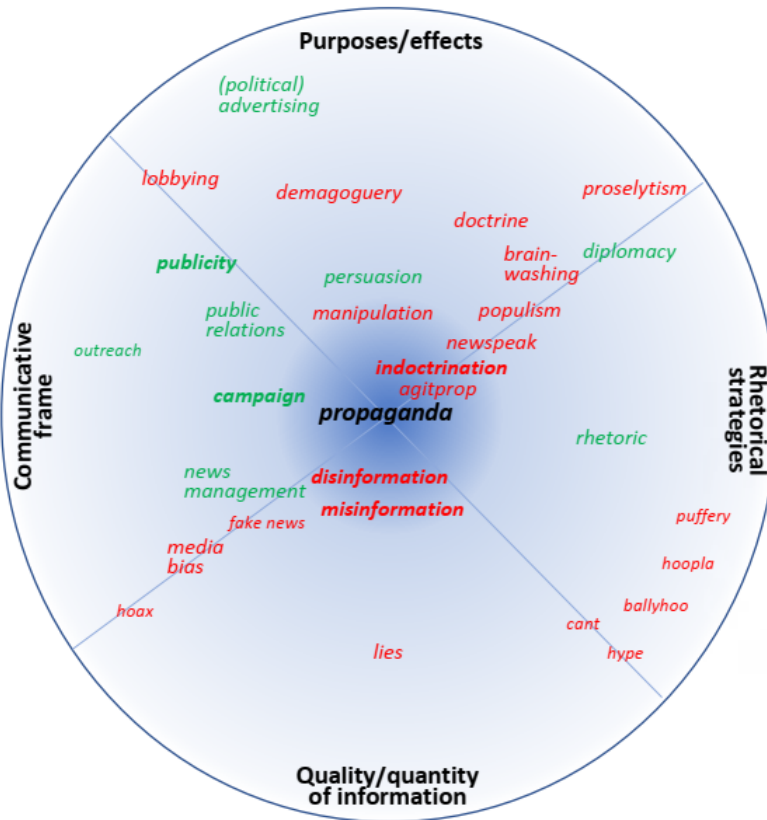


Figure 1. The conceptual field of propaganda

Fig. 1 contains the refined set of 30 terms constituting the conceptual field of propaganda identified in *TIME*. The core is provided by *propaganda* itself, the other labels are arranged concentrically around this core, drawing on four of the key components of propaganda which are highlighted in the respective labels: quality and quantity of information, purposes and effects, rhetorical strategies and communicative frame. The component of sourcing was not made explicit in any of the labels in the set, though it might often be implied. As Fig. 1 also illustrates, the semantics of the labels generally tends to oscillate and often displays overlap with the respective other key components.

Some of the labels as such bear a clear negative connotation (marked red), whereas others are at least superficially neutral (green). However, the actual semantic and discourse prosody can be different in specific contexts, as indicated by ex. (18) and (19). They both contain the compound *publicity campaign*, used neutrally in the first case and carrying a negative load in the second.

- (18) The Administration also launched a **publicity campaign**, featuring a specially drawn Snoopy cartoon, to get consumers to save energy. (1973/10/22)
- (19) This is obviously nothing more than a pre-presidential **publicity campaign** conducted at our expense. (1955/06/27)

The relatively neutral labels mainly relate to mass-mediated practices pursued in the legitimate communicative efforts of governments or organizations (cf. ex. 1). Yet, as already discussed above, what is acceptable and legitimate is not clear-cut and essentially a matter of perspectives. The observation that the more neutral labels (such as *public relations* or *outreach*) are typically reserved for “sympathetic ideas” (Hyzen 2021: 3480) and “acceptable persuasion” (Artz 2020: 1408) does not necessarily hold true for their use in *TIME*. Indeed, terms which might seem relatively objective on the surface level are actually used quite critically in many contexts, as ex. (20) indicates, which includes an explicit link to manipulation.

- (20) the Pentagon **manipulated** information to produce “one of the most stunning pieces of **news management** ever conceived.” (2003/06/09)

It is hardly surprising that particularly the labels referring to (a lack of) the quality and quantity of information carry a clear negative load. This is illustrated by ex. (21), a definition of *disinformation* provided by *TIME* as an entry in “a glossary of current spy terms, most of them used in the West

but some international” which demonstrates the semantic closeness of *disinformation* and *propaganda*.

- (21) **DISINFORMATION**: Spreading of **false propaganda** and forged documents to confuse counter-intelligence or create political unrest or scandals. (1971/10/11)

Likewise, the set of terms particularly relating to purposes and effects is predominantly negatively connoted. In addition to implying malignant intentions, many of them also hint at rhetorical strategies employed (ex. 22).

- (22) Yet sure enough, there was George Wallace [...], dispensing his own brand of sugar-sweet **demagoguery** in his first nationwide TV appeal. (1968/09/13)

Amongst those items highlighting rhetorical strategies, the noun *rhetoric*, itself neutral, often acquires a negative load by premodifying adjectives indicating a high degree of emotionalisation (such as *fiery*, *angry*, etc). More openly negative is the connotation in the cases of *ballyhoo*, *puffery*, *hoopla* and *hype*, which stress the rhetorical device of exaggeration commonly associated with propaganda (ex. 23).

- (23) Our own job, in a world that gets more complex all the time, is to sort out the essential from the transitory, to get to the bottom of conflicting claims, to pierce through the **propaganda** and the **puffery**, to try to get the facts right and to make the conclusions sound. (1961/11/24)

The overview shows that the (near-)synonyms identified tend to highlight selected, often overlapping facets shaping the conceptual field of propaganda. Yet, the frequency and distribution of the labels in the corpus differ both individually and diachronically, as will be demonstrated in the next sections.

6. Diachronic perspective I: Developments of *propagand** through *TIME*

Propaganda has long captured the interest of laypersons and experts, and recently, a “return of propaganda as a contentious debate topic in both public and academic forums” (Hyzen 2021: 3479) was postulated. Here, I will test to what extent this is visible in the frequency and distribution of the core term *propagand** across the nine decades covered in *TIME*. Fig. 2 provides in Fig. 2,

together with the results for the respective periods in *COHA* for comparison. This and the figures in section 7 (Fig. 3-7) draw on the normalised frequencies (per mil) displayed in the Chart function of the online corpora. The numbers in brackets indicate the total frequency of the search item in the respective corpus.

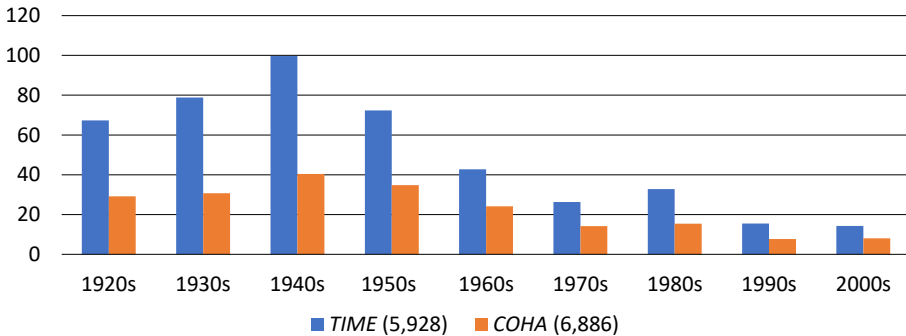


Figure 2. Distribution of *propagand** in *TIME* and *COHA* (per mil)

Fig. 2 shows that across the decades, the normalised frequencies are lower in *COHA*, roughly half of those in *TIME*, which can be attributed to the broader range of genres covered in *COHA*. However, the overall pattern looks relatively similar: There is a peak in the 1940s, which, just like the second-highest frequency in the 1930s, can, of course, be explained by the political situation of WWII and particularly the fact that there were frequent references to official institutions and titles including the term *propaganda*, most notably the *Ministry/Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment* in the third Reich. These are interesting in so far as the connotations can be blurry, ranging from the neutral use of the official titles to a critical perspective on institutions and agents of enemy communication.

The frequencies in the 1920s and 1950s samples are relatively high as well. Yet, in the 1920s, the range of contents and communicative parties associated with propaganda is much broader than that in the 1950s. The earlier *TIME* sample includes, for example, references to *war* and *peace*, (*anti*-)religious, monarchist, nationalist, fascist, labor and socialist propaganda, ascribed to the Germans, British, Soviet Russians, but also various communicative parties within the US. In contrast, post-WWII references are clearly dominated by *communist*, *Soviet*, *Russian* and *Red* propaganda, complemented by some retrospection on *Nazi propaganda*.

Both corpora furthermore display a steady decrease of the term since the 1950s. The collocates of *propagand** in *TIME* indicate that in the 1960s, the

focus on *communist* propaganda is still relatively strong, while it goes beyond *Soviet* agents, reflecting the spread of communism and resulting conflicts in other parts of the world, including Asia (Vietnam, China), Latin America (Cuba) and the Eastern Bloc. In the 1970s and 1980s, *communist* is no longer an important collocate, while *Soviet* gains traction again, particularly in the 1980s samples, which displays a mild increase in the frequency of *propagand** related to increasing Cold War tensions. After that, explicit labelling of propaganda sinks again drastically, reaching an all-time low by the 2000s. Particularly the most recent corpus sample provides evidence of extended notions, e.g. *Wal-Mart's "corporate propaganda"* (2006/03/20).

Clearly, it is not surprising that the frequency and distribution of the key term in *TIME* reflects the socio-historical circumstances in the respective periods from a US-perspective. Rising particularly in times of war and conflict, the results indicate a strong focus on the political domain which constitutes the core of the narrower definitions. What remains to be seen is whether the recent decrease means that there is less public discourse about propaganda or that the label has simply been replaced by other, related terms.

7. Diachronic perspective II: Development of related labels

In this section, I will investigate some of the more frequent labels from Tab. 2. Yet, this endeavour has the caveat that, as pointed out above, many of the (near-)synonyms of *propaganda* are semantically quite broad or ambiguous, and thus, frequencies in *TIME* might be distorted by varying numbers of false hits. Sifting through the respective KWIC results has helped to estimate the relevance of the corpus hits. Additionally, precision was tested manually for three of the most frequent, broader terms (*lies_n*, *manipulation*, *rhetoric_n*), drawing on smaller test samples of 20 randomly selected hits per period (180 hits/label). The (tentative) quantitative developments of the selected terms are sketched in the next four sections, which cluster the results according to the key components highlighted by the respective labels. Here, the focus is on nouns or nominalised forms as potential descriptors of the concept, neglecting, for the time being, other parts of speech.

7.1 Quantity/quality of information

Fig. 3 includes three terms foregrounding the quality and quantity of information: *lies_n*, *misinformation* and *disinformation*.

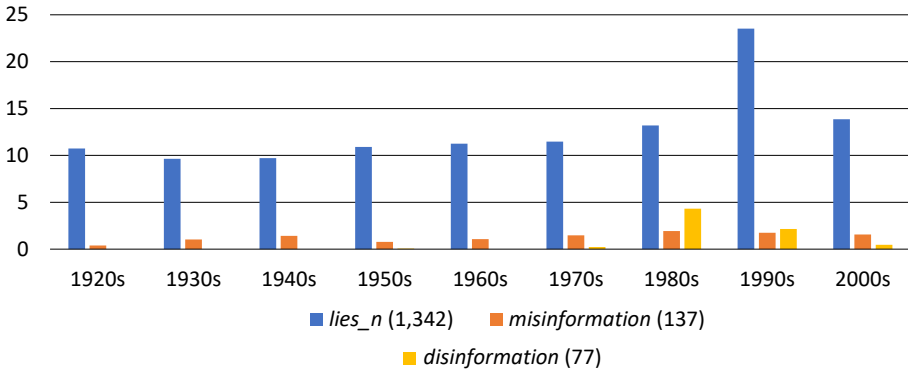


Figure 3. Terms highlighting the quality/quantity of information (per mil)

Lies_n is the most frequent term in this category. Keeping in mind that this search item is semantically very broad, the KWIC results indicate that nevertheless many of these instances are relevant as conceptually close to propaganda. The test sample of 20 hits/period yields an overall precision of 38%. The relevance of the term is also supported by its collocates, which include *propaganda*. Ex. (24) illustrates its use as a descriptor from the conceptual field of propaganda, explicitly rating the effectiveness of lies.

(24) The principle is this: every government, even that of the United States, lies always and about everything; when it can't lie on the main issue, it lies about the details. There are good **lies** and bad. Good ones are those that the middle class believes; excellent ones catch some of the carriage public; execrable ones are those nobody believes, and that only the most shameless ministries dare repeat. (1950/12/25)

(25) He[Governor Roosevelt, BB] began with a slashing attack upon "certain great private utility corporations" for what he called their "systematic, subtle, deliberate and unprincipled **campaign** of **misinformation**, **propaganda**, **lies** and falsehood." (1932/10/03)

The evaluation expressed in ex. (25) gains intensity by listing a range of terms from the conceptual field of propaganda, which next to further synonyms emphasising a lack of veracity also include a reference to the systematic, organised nature of the *campaign* (cf. section 7.4). Among the former is the label *misinformation* which, like *disinformation*, is generally much less frequent in *TIME*. While *misinformation* includes a smaller number of irrelevant hits (e.g. relating to the medical domain), most of them prove relevant within

the conceptual field of propaganda. The tokens of *disinformation* are all relevant and cluster particularly in the 1980s, where they mainly, though not exclusively, refer to *Soviet disinformation*.

7.2 Purposes/effects

Terms focusing on purposes and effects of propaganda are summarised in two figures. Fig. 4a comprises the more frequent labels *lobbying_n* and *manipulation*, which share certain tendencies in their development.

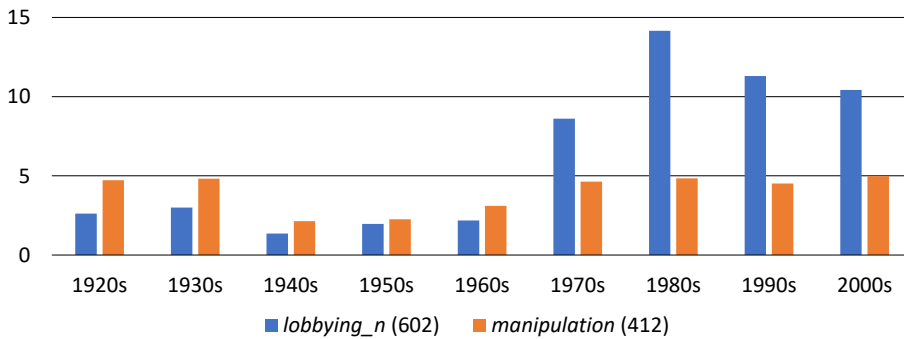


Figure 4a. Terms highlighting purposes/effects (per mil)

The term *lobbying_n* was elicited from the corpus as a relevant search item. Particularly indirect lobbying has been associated with propaganda, sharing similarities regarding their impact on public opinion and advocacy efforts, as shown by ex. (26), which places *lobbying* explicitly in the vicinity of *propaganda*. In *TIME*, the term clearly gains prominence in the 1970s and remains relevant into the 21st century. As *lobbying* is typically directed at the government, which in other cases often acts as the addressor, the term adds another facet to the conceptual field.

- (26) But he promised not to make a tender offer to stockholders unless the majority of McGraw-Hill's board approved the bid or at least agreed "not to oppose it by **propaganda, lobbying**, litigation or otherwise."
(1979/02/12)

The term *manipulation* again has to be treated with more caution. KWIC and collocates indicate the relevance of the label, with *political* on rank 2 of the collocation list. The test sample yields an average degree of precision of 34.5%, with lower degrees in the early samples and higher precision in

the more recent examples (peaking in the 1990s with 60%). Irrelevant hits include particularly references to manipulation in the stock market, but also osteopathic and, more recently, genetic manipulation. Additionally, there is evidence of the overlap of political and economic domains covered in broader conceptualisations of propaganda, as illustrated by ex. (27).

- (27) These ads give kids a look at the cynical **manipulation** behind the targeting of teens by tobacco-marketing campaigns. (2000/03/20)

Both terms, *lobbying* and *manipulation* show the fewest hits in the 1940s which contrasts with the peaks displayed in the usage of many of the other terms in that period.

Fig. 4b displays a second set of terms stressing manipulative force: *indoctrination*, *demagoguery* and *populism*. Here, the search results have a high degree of precision.

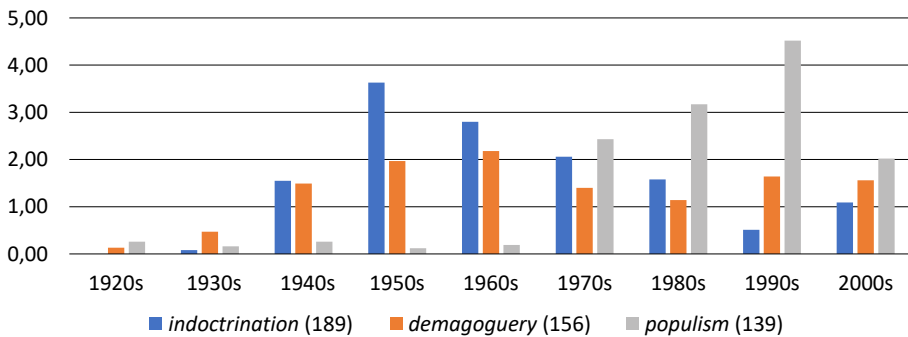


Figure 4b. Terms highlighting purposes/effects (per mil)

From the 1920s to the 1980s, *indoctrination* and *demagoguery* display a relatively similar distribution, with hardly any evidence before the 1940s and peaks in the 1950s and 1960s. After that, the former keeps on decreasing whereas the latter rises again. *Indoctrination* is closely associated with communism, while *demagoguery* often refers to US politics. Ex. (28) contrasts *demagoguery* with *principled opposition* and links it to *populism*. The close relationship between the two concepts is also shown in ex. (29).

- (28) It illuminated a critical decision the Democrats now face – between principled opposition to the Bush Administration and **populist demagoguery** on the two main issues of this election, the war and the economy. (2003/09/15)

- (29) [...] the current political ferment of Eastern Europe is an inherently volatile mix in which old demons – belligerent nationalism and **demagogic populism** – could win out as easily as liberal democracy. (1990/08/06)

Mentions of *populism*, used in *TIME* almost exclusively in reference to US politics, have increased since the 1970s, however, decreasing again after a peak in the 1990s. The label also strongly hints at rhetorical strategies, evidence of which is further discussed in the next section.

7.3 Rhetorical strategies

Two of the more frequent labels foregrounding rhetorical strategies are *diplomacy* and the term *rhetoric_n* itself. Though semantically broader, they display a substantial overlap with the core concept of *propaganda*. While *diplomacy* is found in higher, but variable numbers in the first half of the 20th century, *rhetoric_n* starts becoming more frequent in the 1960s, peaking in the 1970s. Both terms display a similar decrease from the 1980s to the 2000s.

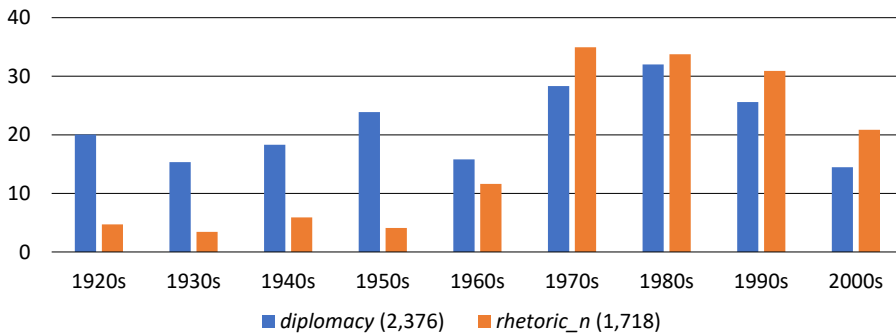


Figure 5. Terms highlighting rhetorical strategies (per mil)

The quantitative development might hint at Artz' (2020: 1409) observation that “[g]overnment propaganda has become more polished and coordinated, often appearing as public diplomacy”, which, he cautions, nevertheless still constitutes systematic attempts to control public opinion. Given this, the search results for *diplomacy* could not be classified for precision. Corpus evidence shows that while *diplomacy* often has neutral or even positive value, it also adopts negative connotations, as in ex. (30), which associates *diplomacy* with *demagoguery* and sees democracy endangered.

- (30) What was clear amid the **diplomacy** and **demagoguery** last week was that the other D word – democracy – had taken a serious hit. (2000/02/12)

In the case of *rhetoric_n*, the test sample of 20 hits/period showed an average precision of 44%. The relevant hits usually display a negative semantic prosody and discourse prosody in *TIME*.

7.4 Communicative frame

Fig. 6 compiles terms relating to elements of the communicative frame, especially the systematic, organised nature of mass-mediated practices.

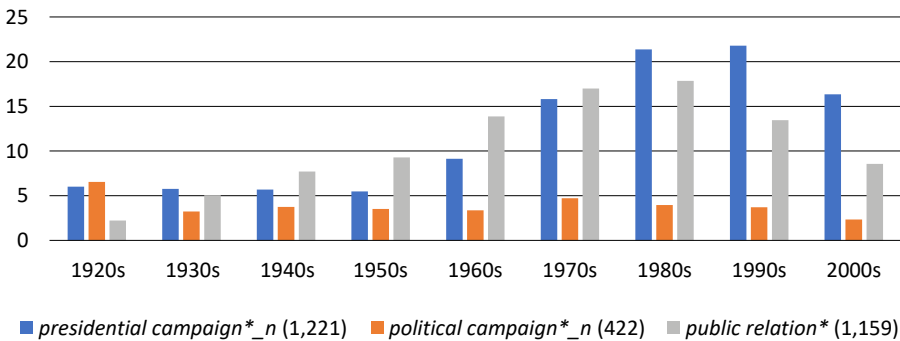


Figure 6. Terms highlighting elements of the communicative frame (per mil)

Campaign is among the top ten collocates of *propaganda* (rank 7), yet as the term as such is highly frequent (27,580 tokens), the top two ADJ *campaign*_n* combinations were selected for closer scrutiny: *presidential campaign* and *political campaign*. The former exerts a strong impact on the overall quantitative development of *campaign*, which clearly rises from the 1950s on, peaks in the 1990s and then falls again. However, as it constitutes a crucial element in the electoral process in democratic countries (even though it might be realised by illegitimate communicative practices), the label appears somewhat more marginal in the conceptual field of propaganda. The same is true, to a certain extent, for *political campaign*, which is generally less frequent and displays a milder, slightly wave-like development. It is often used neutrally, but also associated with practices viewed critically in *TIME*, bringing it closer to the core notion of propaganda.

*Public relation** shows a wave-like development similar to that of *presidential campaign*, with a slightly earlier peak in the 1980s. In *TIME*, it

oscillates between the domains of politics, advertising and corporate communication. Ex. (31) fits the narrower conceptualisation of propaganda.

- (31) But it is bad history and worse **public relations** to pretend that Islam has always been pacific [...] (2002/12/23)

7.5 Recent trends

One of the most important trends emerging from the quantitative overview above is that, with only two exceptions, the labels tested demonstrate a more or less drastic decrease in the 2000s. The results thus seem to indicate a decreasing amount of discourse about propaganda in *TIME*. However, is that really the case or have new terms been introduced as descriptors of propagandistic phenomena in the 21st century?

Based on current public discourse, one could assume that *fake news* might be one such candidate. However, with 21 instances in total, the label is generally quite rare in *TIME*. And although there is a clear rise in the 2000s sample, which yields 18 of these instances, most of them actually only function as metalabels for headlines from the satirical *The Onion*. Indeed, a quick search in the *Corpus of News on the Web* (NOW, Davies 2016) indicates that *fake news* gained massive traction only in the second decade of the 21st century, peaking in 2018.

Returning to *TIME*, the analysis so far has indicated that propaganda-related terms tend to increase in times of war and crisis. Based on socio-historical background knowledge regarding major conflicts of the early 21st century, including e.g. the US war in Afghanistan, the 09/11 terrorist attacks and the Iraq War, but also domestic controversies such as those of the 2000 elections, some more search items were tested in *TIME* which allow for the identification of further, potentially relevant terms. So far, two tendencies have emerged, which are illustrated below by two examples, but require further systematic study.

On the one hand, the preliminary results indicate that conflicts seem to be executed more directly and openly, as indicated by an increase of the term *attack*_n* to a clear peak of 372.64 (per mil) in the 2000s. Though these include a number of irrelevant hits (e.g. *heart attack*; *military attack* in the literal sense), many of the 2000s instances have a political connotation bringing it close to the communicative purposes of propaganda, yet with a stronger element of coercion and lacking the clandestine nature often ascribed to *propaganda* (ex. 32).

- (32) Gore was hammering away at Bradley's health-care plan, as usual, and Bradley was sneering back at him, employing his recent tactic of responding to Gore **attacks** by pointing out their theatricality. (2000/01/17)

While this usage extends the spectrum of communicative practices, involving a further semantically broad term, there is also evidence of highly specific labels. For example, the use of *jihād** booms in the 2000s (37.96 per mil). Of course, this notion of the 'holy war' again goes beyond communicative activities. However, its closeness to the concept of propaganda is not only visible in the original contexts of spreading and defending the Islamic faith, but made particularly evident by its metaphorical usage, as in *the jihād of Cuban politics* (2000/04/10) or *junk-food jihads* (2000/11/13).

8. Conclusions

As expectable, metadiscourse about propaganda in *TIME* reflects the socio-historical circumstances of the respective periods and the particular stance of the magazine. The use of the label *propagand** itself gives evidence of both narrow and broader conceptualisations as well as metalinguistic negotiations of basic properties, related and opposing notions. The results of this corpus-assisted discourse study show that, though negative connotations prevail, the semantic prosody and discourse prosody of propaganda is more variable than often acknowledged by both lay and expert definitions. Also, while the us-vs-them perspectives attested for other publications such as the *New York Times* (cf. Oddo 2018: 2) certainly also manifest themselves in *TIME*, there are also critical reflections on propagandistic practices in and by the US.

Method triangulation helped to map out the multi-faceted conceptual field of propaganda and its (near-)synonyms and elaborate on their diachronic development. While references to propaganda tend to increase in times of war and crisis, there is a remarkable overall decrease of the labels towards the 21st century, a time certainly not free from conflict. This is not just true for *propagand** itself, but also for most of the (near-)synonyms, including the (superficially) more neutral, euphemistic labels which particularly gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century.

On the one hand, this could indicate that public discourse about propaganda has generally become less frequent in *TIME*. On the other hand, however, preliminary results suggest that the range of related terms has increased, providing evidence of overlapping semantic domains.

This includes both broader terms, which share some, but not all of the key components of propaganda, and very specific terms including a propagandistic facet. Yet, these require further testing in future research. Next steps in this project also include a more thorough Critical Discourse Analysis of a selected subset of the corpus data, which draws attention to the actors associated with propaganda and the activities ascribed to them.

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Striking a balance between norms of impartiality and adversarialness in broadcast interviews

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on questions posed by professional journalists in broadcast interviews on sensitive topics, like pandemics, wars, and international affairs. Proceeding from the rules of conduct of interviews as characterised in manuals and scholarly studies, particularly with reference to journalistic stance, the aim of the research is to check if, and to what extent, interviewers diverge from the ‘rules’ advocating impartiality so far as to betray subjectivity/adversarialness. To carry out the study, I analyse a subsection of the *InterDiplo Corpus*, where the interviewers are mother-tongue speakers of English while their interlocutors are ambassadors from different lingua-cultural backgrounds; the data are screened both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results unveil a set of discursive traits in the questions posed by journalists that partly diverge from the current rules of conduct, while also pointing to sociolinguistic differences between male and female journalists.

Keywords: broadcast interviews, journalistic norms, questions, impartiality in journalism, corpus linguistics.

So let's be clear and I want reality to interfere with the propaganda.

(InterDiplo Corpus_war_004)

1. Introduction

The interview has always been an asset in a variety of professions; in the healthcare system, for example, textbooks teach and train (prospective) doctors and practitioners how to conduct interviews with patients and

relatives to develop “the art of understanding” (Shea 2017) for appropriate bio-psycho-social assessment, diagnosis and therapy, particularly in the case of psychiatric patients (Carlat 2016; MacKinnon et al. 2015). To this end, in each phase of the interviewing process, the cultural backgrounds of interactants, as well as cues offered by body language (Platt – Gordon 2004), need to be taken into consideration to ensure effective communication (Cole – Bird 2014; Sommers-Flanagan – Sommers-Flanagan 2015).

In the legal and social service, professionals are provided with specifically structured protocols for best practice to guide them through the task of interviewing the people involved in offences, especially children (e.g., National Children’s Advocacy Center 2019). When interviewing young victims of abuse (Fessinger et al. 2021; Lamb et al. 2018), for instance, the focus of the interview is particularly on how testimony can be made reliable despite the understandable reticence victims may have. In turn, interrogations of people accused of a crime, as well as witnesses or other prospective informants, are key to detect behaviour symptoms of truth or deception (Inbau et al. 2010).

Social science research also heavily relies on interviewing as an established research method to gather a detailed account of the quality and nature of people(s)’s views, experiences and behaviour in the lingua-cultural contexts they occur (Rubin – Rubin 2012). Indeed, one-to-one interviews and focus groups elicit narrative data (Alshenqeeti 2014) of invaluable help to psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists to build a holistic picture of the personal and group traits of respondents.

In journalism, the question-and-answer interview format familiar to modern readers is credited to have been born in 1859 (Silvester 1994: 4), when Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, interviewed Brigham Young, leader of the Mormon Church (Turnbull 1936). Since then, journalistic interviews have grown from “a stuffy, pompous thing that could interest only a minority of the serious-minded” into “a lively means of informing and entertaining millions of people” (Adams – Hicks 2009: 1, quoting Wynford Hicks). In such continuous swing and balance between entertainment and information lie the current rules of conduct of journalistic interviews, both written and spoken, whose benchmark is the need for the journalist to maintain and safeguard impartiality while attempting to elicit from their interlocutors both information and, at times, also possibly inconvenient truths.

Bearing this in mind, the main research question of the present paper is whether current journalistic interviews manage to comply to the rules so

as to strike a balance between impartiality and subjectivity. Moreover, little has been said so far, to my knowledge, on possibly different attitudes to questioning between male and female professional journalists; hence, the present study will also attempt to address this topic.

To do so, I will first focus on the specificities of journalistic interviews as recommended in manuals and illustrated in scholarly studies, from the prototypical structure of interviews to the types of questions and the favoured turn-taking moves (section 2). I will then illustrate the corpus exploited for the study, which draws from the *InterDiplo Corpus* developed at the University of Verona, Italy. The subcorpus selected for the present research, in particular, covers broadcast interviews where professional journalists ask diplomats questions on pandemics, wars, and international affairs (section 3). In section 4, the data will be analysed and discussed both quantitatively and qualitatively from the discourse-pragmatic perspective.

2. The design of the journalistic interview and how it is conducted

2.1 The journalistic interview

Journalistic interviews may vary depending on medium, setting, format, topic, and aim of the interview itself. What follows is an overview of the taxonomy offered in textbooks, though bearing in mind that trainers and scholars do not always share the same terminology.

The medium of an interview may be either written or spoken, thus diversifying between 'print' and 'broadcast'; in broadcast interviews, in particular, the setting may be either a televised studio with all the interactants talking face-to-face, or video-/telephone-mediated, with interviews conducted remotely. Now that social networks have spread worldwide, interviews can equally take place online, for example on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube; in that case, the virtual environment also allows journalists to crowdsource the sentiment of a wide range of population simply by posting a question on their account and receive responses directly from their followers.

With reference to the format, interviews can unfold as one-to-one or as a panel, where several people are questioned at the same time. In both cases, the interview may be either 'structured' or 'unstructured' (Morán García 2023). When structured, there is no flexibility, since the interviewer (IR) asks the same pre-determined questions to all interviewees (IEs) and collects data

in a standardised way, for example, to assess workers' well-being or their job performance, to evaluate a product or a customer's satisfaction. In contrast, in an unstructured interview, IR and IE have a free-flowing conversation with no pre-defined set of questions; this allows the journalist to follow the flow of the conversation and ask questions accordingly.

Bearing in mind both topic and aim, Clayman and Heritage (2002) qualify all broadcast interviews conducted by professional journalists as 'news interviews', while Lee-Potter (2017) and Sedorkin and Forbes (2023) distinguish between 'news' and 'feature' interviews (covering both written and spoken ones). Specifically, they remark that the former gather information on hard and soft news to check facts or ascertain details; in case of hard news, the questions generally focus on the five *wh*-words and the *how*, as for an accident with eyewitnesses, bystanders, police and fire/ambulance personnel. In case of soft news, showbiz and celebrities are involved, as well as 'vox pops' to gather the people's perspective with the benefit of immediacy and spontaneity. In turn, the latter – otherwise termed 'in-depth' interviews by Morán García (2023: 9) – address certified experts to gather relevant information about a specific topic. Instances of feature interviews may be with an expert on a financial crisis, with a scientist on climate change, with a doctor about Covid19, or again with a political leader on international situations. Be it a news or a feature interview, when internationally renowned personalities are involved, including movie and sport stars or political and business leaders, the resulting broadcast may also be termed 'prestige' interview (Sedorkin – Forbes 2023: 6).

A different perspective is offered by Frost (2010), who distinguishes between 'informational', 'emotional', 'interpretive' and 'adversarial' interviews, respectively providing facts about a news event (informational), sharing someone's personal experience (emotional), getting experts or campaigners to analyse and explain events (interpretive), and finally asking someone in authority to explain and/or justify actions and policy (adversarial).

Overall, while the terminology may partly differ, virtually all trainers and scholars agree on the fundamentals of how to conduct an interview, from the preparation stage to its closing and broadcasting, as well as the editing of the text for publication in case of written interviews. For the sake of the analysis to be conducted in the present paper, which focuses on the broadcast output of an interview, in section 2.1 I will illustrate the rules of conduct related to the types of questions to be asked and will linger particularly on the degree of impartiality to be safeguarded by the journalist.

2.2 Conducting an interview

Trainers agree that the first words and question of a journalist are key to establish rapport with their interlocutor; hence, the IR should start the interview with a remark that makes the IE feel not intimidated and ready to talk (Morán García: 33), for example by addressing common issues and establishing a good connection or by physically mirroring the IEs' body language and matching the way they are sitting (Grossman, quoted in Lee-Potter 2017: 76). As a result, the very first question needs to be uncontroversial: "Start with an easy, uncontroversial question. (...) A few straightforward questions will get you and your interviewer warmed up and into the flow of the conversation. Leave the more sensitive questions till later on in the interview. (Lee-Potter 2017: 64-65)."

Questions themselves are of different types, the most typical being 'open(-ended)' and 'closed(-ended)' questions. Open(-ended) questions are those that encourage IEs to give detailed answers, expand on the topic and/or voice their perspective, as in (1):¹

- (1) What messages are you getting from X living here who are concerned about their friends and family out in your country? (covid19_004)

As in (1), open questions usually begin with *why*, *how*, and *what* and trainers agree that open-ended questions should be favoured, since they allow IEs to speak in depth about the topic of discussion (Morán García 2023: 37).

In contrast, closed(-ended) questions require a 'yes' or 'no' answer and, indeed, they are also called 'yes/no' questions; as such, they do not leave the interlocutor much ground for interpretation or free speech, since they channel them onto a binary pattern:

- (2) Is Biden correct? (war_001)

These questions are credited to be useful for the journalist as they elicit specific answers and guide the interview, thus preventing the IE from straying from the main topics. Yet, for these very reasons, they should not be favoured, since they limit the freedom of the IE; as Sedorkin and Forbes put it, closed questions can be used "but not too often" (2023: 62).

¹ All examples are drawn from the *InterDiplo Corpus* (see section 3 for more information about the corpus). Names of (opposing) countries and populations have been replaced with "X" and "Y" to safeguard anonymity of data; punctuation, bold characters and underlining are mine.

Two more types of questions can be identified, namely ‘choice’ questions, offering an alternative between two, as in (3), and ‘requests’, which may take the form of either direct/indirect interrogatives (e.g., *I wonder if you can..., could you...*) as in (4), or of imperatives, as in (5):

- (3) do you see this as more of a reactive response or do you see this as the desire of the X government to say this is the moment when X should lead? (covid19_033)
- (4) could you please get me the mortality rate? (covid19_070)
- (5) pinpoint for us and briefly the concrete measures you are calling for to be taken globally (covid19_030)

While choice questions – also called ‘polar’ – somehow impose an answer onto the interlocutor, like the closed questions illustrated above, requests are more similar to the open ones, since they leave more ground to the IE in answering.

Finally, independently of the syntactic structure, mention needs to be made of ‘leading questions’, which prompt or encourage IEs to give the answer wanted or assumed, as in (6), and of ‘(stand-alone) statements’, namely declaratives that function as comments or questions seeking confirmation, as in (7):

- (6) Why is your president downplaying the risk? (war_002)
- (7) That’s just a claim. There is no evidence and there is no truth. (war_016)

In (6), the journalist is not enquiring about the truthfulness of the president downplaying or not the risk, but rather takes it for granted and asks the reason for it. By ‘leading’ the IE to answer as required, this type of questions embodies a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the journalist that may end into the loss of impartiality. In turn, in (7) the journalist is making a statement with no explicit question that acts both as a personal comment on the previous answer and as prompt for the next response.

Due to the presuppositions they embed (i.e. *downplaying the risk* in ex. 6) and the remarks they may convey (7), both leading questions and (stand-alone) statements can very often turn adversarial; hence, scholars and trainers agree that, to establish and safeguard rapport, journalists “can’t do it right at the start of the interview” (Lee-Potter 2017: 153). Overall, bearing in mind the informative mission of the journalist and consequently

the key function of the interview of gaining information on behalf of one's audience (Strong 2014: 2), most scholars agree that journalists should "avoid judgmental language" (Lee-Potter 2017: 99) and should rather take a matter-of-fact approach; in other words, "the journalist should be objective" (Morán García 2023: 23) and "avoid biased language" (Morán García 2023: 62).

However, Clayman and Heritage (2002) value adversarial questions as a way to safeguard objectivity and not as a practice to be necessarily avoided; indeed, they posit that journalists are rather called to strike a balance between two competing conceptions of 'objectivity': on the one hand, objectivity as impartiality, which calls for neutrality in questioning, and, on the other hand, objectivity as adversarialness, since "to achieve factual accuracy and a balance of perspectives, journalists should actively challenge their sources" (Clayman – Heritage 2002: 29).

Moving from the rules of conduct illustrated above, in sections 3 and 4 I will check if and to what extent current broadcast interviews respect such recommendations in conducting an interview, particularly with reference to the issue of impartiality vs. subjectivity. Special attention will be dedicated to possible diverging attitudes between male and female IRs with reference to the types of questions preferred or dis-preferred and the discursive strategies enacted.

3. Corpus data

To carry out my analysis, I relied on a subsection of the *InterDiplo Corpus*². The corpus is devised to study how the English language is used in broadcast interviews and discussions; it covers interviews from professional and non-professional journalists, as well as from celebrity entertainers and broadcasters addressing diplomats, politicians (largely government officials) or newsworthy public figures and certified experts on (potentially) sensitive

² The *InterDiplo Corpus* was initiated at the University of Verona, Italy, within the research project "Digital Humanities applied to Foreign Languages and Literatures", funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research within the framework of the Departments of Excellence 2018-2022. As a first result of the project, the *InterDiplo-Covid19 Corpus* was compiled as a pilot corpus (Cavaliere – Corrizzato – Facchinetti 2021), to test the methodology of data selection and tagging system. The subsection chosen for this paper relies on further data added to the *InterDiplo Corpus* within the nationally funded PRIN 2020-2023 project "Communicating transparency: New trends in English-language corporate and institutional disclosure practices in intercultural settings".

topics, like Covid19, wars, climate change, health&wellbeing, and – more broadly – international affairs. All interviews were conducted between 2020 and 2022 and were drawn in full from well-known international broadcasting companies and their YouTube channels. For the present study, I selected a subcorpus of 10 interviews, as reported in Table 1.

Table 1. *InterDiplo* subcorpus

NETWORK	IR NATIONALITY	IR GENDER	IE NATIONALITY	IE GENDER	IE ROLE
FRANCE 24	UK	F	Russia	M	Permanent Representative to the EU
SKY	UK	F	Russia	M	Ambassador to the EU
CHANNEL 4	UK	F	Italy	M	Ambassador to the UK
EURONEWS (ENG)	UK	F	Portugal	M	UN Secretary General
BBC	UK	F	Russia	M	Ambassador to the UK
BBC	UK	M	Russia	M	Ambassador to the UK
BBC	UK	M	Israel	M	Permanent Representative to the UN
iTV	UK	M	Russia	M	Ambassador to the UN
SKY	UK	M	China	M	Ambassador to the UK
RTE'	UK	M	Russia	M	Ambassador to Ireland

The criteria for the selection of the data are as follows. In the first place, all interviews go beyond the sheer interactional pattern 'question-answer-next question' – which does not lead to proper conversation – and rather exhibit follow-up moves whereby the IR may call for amplification of the previous

answer to elicit additional details, clarify points, and dig deeper into what has just been uttered by the IE,³ as in (8):

- (8) IR (question 1) (...) is everything going according to plan?
 IE (answer 1) (...) we have now more stabilized situation over the year and actually well things looks that we have a certain stability in this situation right now.
 IR (question 2) And by stability what do you mean by stability?
 IE (answer 2) That there are no serious moves (...) our troops is now regrouping and what I am seeing is I do not envisage that in the coming, well say weeks or days we will have serious events on the ground.
 IR (question 3) So is this conflict unfolding in the way you expected it to? (war_008)

Here the journalist opens with question 1, rephrases it in question 3 and, in-between, takes up answer 1 in question 2 with the same word used by the IE (*stability*), so as to ensure clarification and a proper reply to her first question. In turn, the linking words *and* and *so* strengthen the logical consequentiality of the conversational flow.

The second criterion for the selection of the data applies to interactants. With reference to IRs, the choice was made of ten different professional journalists, all British-born and UK-based; indeed, the common lingua-cultural background of IRs on the one hand avoids the discursive flow to be possibly affected by different degrees of linguistic expertise, while on the other hand it safeguards from differences in interviewing practices prompted by diverse institutional backgrounds; for example, “the development of news interview appears to be quite different” in America and Britain (Clayman – Heritage 2002: 55). Moreover, the diversification of journalists limits at best the skewing of data due to possible idiosyncratic linguistic choices of single IRs. Finally, the journalists are equally subdivided between men and women to detect possible sociolinguistic variations in the strategy of conducting interviews. Both subsets of men and women cover ca. 80 minutes each, so as to ensure comparability of data, for a total of ~27,000 tokens.

As for IEs, of the three professional categories covered in the *InterDiplo* Corpus – diplomats, politicians, and certified experts –, only interviews featuring diplomats were selected for this subcorpus, in order to avoid variations in the way IRs may handle different professional categories

³ Morán García terms these moves ‘follow-up questions’ (Morán García 2023: 42).

of IEs. The fact that all IEs turn out to be men is due to the limited number of interviews with female diplomats available.

Finally, each interview of the corpus has been saved, transcribed, converted into XML and tagged for metadata, parts of speech and paralinguistic features (e.g. overlapping speech, pauses, repairs, restarts, hesitations) as well as for question- and answer-types according to the taxonomy ‘open’, ‘closed’, ‘(stand-alone) statement’, ‘request’, and ‘choice’.

4. Results and discussion

Two complementing levels of analysis have been conducted on the corpus. Specifically, the corpus has been screened quantitatively with the software *SketchEngine*, to identify the occurrences of the question types posed by the journalists; then, all data have been screened manually, bearing in mind both the syntactic structures and the discursive moves embedding them. Special attention has been dedicated to the introductory question of each IR.

The results of the quantitative analysis show that journalists markedly waive the rules of conduct illustrated in Section 2 with reference to open-ended questions that should strongly be favoured in interviews. Indeed, the highest frequency of occurrence has rather been recorded for closed questions (53.6%), while open-ended ones appear to be exploited by IRs to a lower extent (33.1%), as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of questions in the *InterDiplo* subcorpus (% in brackets)

IR	OPEN	CLOSED	(STAND-ALONE) STATEMENT	REQUEST	CHOICE	TOTAL
female	36 (36.6)	63 (33.6)	5 (4.6)	1 (0.9)	2 (1.8)	107
male	37 (32.7)	55 (48.6)	19 (16.8)	0	2 (1.7)	113
total	73 (33.1)	118 (53.6)	24 (10.9)	1 (0.4)	4 (1.8)	220

This confirms what has been recorded in a previous study (Facchinetti 2023) based on a different section of the *InterDiplo Corpus* and focussed on interviews that were addressed to a wider range of IEs, including politicians and certified (science) experts, and diversifying between face-to-face and video-mediated interviews. There as well the data yielded few – if no – instances of choice- and request-questions and a consistently greater percentage of closed questions, though with differing results between face-

to-face interviews and those conducted in video-mediated environments (respectively 67.3% vs. 59.6%).

In the present corpus, the virtual lack of requests is shared both by male and by female IRs, as well as the prevalence of closed questions, though with a distinctly higher percentage in favour of females (58.8%) over males (48.6%). In contrast, male journalists resort to (stand-alone) statements much more than their female counterparts (16.8% vs. 4.6%). Hence, the data seem to suggest possibly diverging attitudes and strategies of male and female journalists in addressing their interlocutors.

The subsequent manual checking of each contextualised occurrence has allowed verifying that many of the open questions uttered by male IRs could be better treated as ‘closed questions in disguise’, since they are framed syntactically as open-ended ones, starting with a *wh*-word, but function as rhetorical questions, like (9):

(9) why should our viewers believe (...)? (war_011)

In (9) the IR challenges what his IE has just said and puts himself in an adversarial mode; yet in so doing he also runs the risk of losing impartiality. Similarly, questions framed using negative-interrogative syntax leave little ground for free speech, since they embody a very strong preference for a ‘yes’ answer (5.3% males vs. 3.7% females); as such, they are pragmatically highly coercive:

(10) doesn't it need a global investigation now as soon as possible with world renowned scientists? (adv_015)

The degree of adversarialness is further strengthened by overlapping speech, whereby the IR interrupts his IE while answering; once again, this has been recorded much more prominently in the male than in the female subset (15% vs 4.6%):⁴

(11) IE: We know this guy He is very unprofessional he Well, we have, of course people who thinks differently He is one of them That's all right But I can say to you that 75% of the X population do support the <overlap> military operation </overlap> <overlap> But </overlap> he is a senior official <overlap> in the X delegation at the United Nations

⁴ In the tagging, <overlap> and </overlap> mark respectively the beginning and end of the overlapping chunk.

</overlap> <overlap> I wouldn't say so </overlap> We know the guy he is yes, he stayed for some time at the Ministry. (war_005)

Rather than eliciting information, as should be the case according to rules of conduct, the IR repeatedly challenges his interlocutor and blocks his flow of speech in sustained disagreement.

When focussing on the question encapsulated in the first move, the data tend to confirm a stronger preference of men for adversarialness and for leading their interlocutors in the direction they favour. Indeed, all male IRs open their interview with a question that is either covertly or overtly provocative:

- (12) Let's begin with what appears to be a real sense of confusion at the top of your government in X. The world was expecting a formal declaration (...), they were expecting it days ago and it never happened. Why? (adv_007)
- (13) Ambassador, the facts are clear. Thousands of people have been killed in this war. So far, 14 million people have had to leave their homes (...). Why did X start this war? (war_005)
- (14) Are significant numbers of your troops being removed from (...)? (adv_009)
- (15) Do you accept that X has a problem with trust? (adv_11)
- (16) (to the audience): I asked him when his country would stop his aggression (...). (war_11)

Two discursive patterns are to be identified in the instances above: prefatory statements and leading questions; specifically, both (12) and (13) exhibit a prefaced question design that contains one or more statements prior to the proper question. In (12) the IR anticipates his perspective also by means of the evidential *appear*, thus presenting as fact what may derive from his perspective; in (13) the IR does the same resorting to *clear*. In turn, (14), (15), and (16) are simple questions – thus with no prefatory statement preparing the ground – but they are structured as leading questions, with embedded presuppositions that make the initial question far from uncontroversial. In contrast, according to recommendations, initial questions should rather be neutral to safeguard rapport and put the interlocutor at ease. Here the 'unfriendliness' and bias of the presuppositional content emerges from

significant in (14), from *problem* in (15) and from *aggression* in (16). Moreover, two of these leading questions (14 and 15) are even framed as closed rather than as open-ended, once again moving away from the recommendations of favouring open questions at the start of interviews.

In turn, female journalists make use of prefatory statements in three out of five of their initial questions:

- (17) I'd like I'd like to start by talking about some of the latest military moves by X, by X around Y. Six X warships sent through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. What's the purpose of this deployment? (adv_014)
- (18) The whole of your country is now quarantined. Can you just describe for us the situation that X now finds itself in? (covid19_004)
- (19) You said the whole world must fight back to stop this pandemic reaching apocalyptic proportions. Pinpoint for us and briefly the concrete measures you are calling for to be taken globally. (covid19_030)

Unlike the prefatory statements in (12) and (13), the ones exhibited in (17), (18) and (19) appear relatively neutral, since they present facts and focus on numbers without any word pointing to perspective or subjectivity. In this way, IRs open their interview with a question that leaves the floor to dialogue and does not appear adversarial, thus putting the interlocutor at ease.

Out of the five opening questions in the female subset, one IR resorts to a very neutral simple question with no prefatory statement (20):

- (20) I want to ask you first of all in terms of what you call the special military operation, is everything going according to plan? (war_008)

while only one IR addresses her IE in the first question in a clearly adversarial mode (21):

- (21) I want to kick off with this: can we really believe anything you say? And the reason I ask you this is that you toured the world's media not long ago and in interview after interview you assured the world that the invasion of X wasn't going to happen and I've got lots of examples here's a couple this is cnbc on the 21st January you said you were asked that (...), you said there was no evidence pointing to that, that's not your aim (...) and then another one (...) you said (...) and you then went on to say (...) ambassador, did you say those things because you

were lying or did you not know the truth you didn't realize that the invasion was imminent? (adv_026)

The incorporation of the terms *really* and *anything* embodies preference for a negative response and overtly challenges the IE to defend his position. It is to be noted, though, that in the same move the adversarial question is immediately followed by a justification ("And the reason I ask you this is that") recalling what the interlocutor himself had previously declared officially, so as to justify the adversarialness of the introductory question and to prepare the ground for an even more adversarial one, which is framed as a choice question. Indeed, using the IE as a source to corroborate her claim, the IR enacts a shrewd tactic that somehow stonewalls her assertion and allows her to maintain professional balance and neutrality while being adversarial in questioning.

As mentioned above, data show that female IRs disprefer stand-alone statements (4.6%) not followed by questions – and largely rely on pre- or post-question statements which, as in (18, 19, 20 and 22), allow them to buttress their statements with sources and data, so as to appear neutral and not to endorse those claims personally. Overall, then, when asking questions, they appear to be more tactful and less overtly adversarial than their male counterparts, who, in turn, put themselves into the adversarial arena more overtly.

Overall, in the corpus all IRs share some practices that do not fully respect the recommendations illustrated in section 2. In the first place, while rules of conduct suggest using closed questions sparingly, this typology is exploited largely both by male and by female IRs, so as to channel the IE in either one direction or the other, leaving little ground for free speech.

Secondly, all IRs resort to leading questions, which are aptly embedded particularly in the open-ended ones. In so doing, journalists on the one hand appear to allow free speech via an open question, while on the other they limit the freedom of their IEs by channelling – or rather challenging – them in a pointed direction.

Thirdly, they all resort to pre- and post-question statements, largely to disclaim responsibility from what they are about to say. In such statements, journalists offer numbers, as in (17), or quote previous statements of the IEs themselves, as in (21), or again mention high ranking sources who take a particular view of the issue (22) and finally resort to 'vox pop' (23):

- (22) I'm I'm sorry sir but what I hear from western leaders is that they would like a peaceful negotiated settlement then why are they pumping weapons into X at an increasing speed that will certainly not

help unless they of course want to fight this war until the lastliving X
(adv_026)

- (23) And I've spoken to many X since February the 24th, civilians, many of them (war_008)

By resorting to data and sources, IRs provide factual and commonly shared evidence to their statements and thus manage to 'dress' their remarks with objectivity.

These shared practices clearly paint a picture of IRs – at least the British ones under scrutiny in this study – partly not aligned with the current rules of conduct but still attempting to safeguard professionalism and impartiality when addressing and challenging their interlocutors on sensitive topics.

5. Conclusions

Clayman and Heritage remark that "interview questioning is very far from being a neutral activity", since it "is not, and cannot be, strictly neutral" (Clayman – Heritage 2002: 234); indeed, the selection of topics and the choice of questions make neutrality virtually impossible.

The study illustrated in this paper seems to confirm that, when it comes to sensitive topics like wars, pandemics and, overall, international issues, it is hard for IRs to tread the narrow lane of adversarialness without turning judgemental, despite that fact that journalists are invited to "be careful not to offer qualifications, opinion or value judgments" (Morán García 2023: 51). The rules of conduct generally put forward to define the playing field within which more or less cooperatively IRs and IEs interact favour keeping the channel open to dialogue, safeguarding rapport with one's interlocutor and leaving floor to the IE to express their perspective through open questions.

However, the high use of closed and leading questions in the corpus testifies to a general trend that partly distances the practice of current broadcast interviews from such rules; more precisely, the data show that IRs, on the one hand, critically challenge their IEs in different ways while, on the other, they attempt to avoid excessive aggressivity and confrontation, particularly in the female subset. To successfully strike such balance between impartiality and adversarialness, the IRs rely on statements putting forward data and sources, which allow them to disclaim responsibility of what is being put forward. Pre- and post-question statements occur in both subsets, while stand-alone statements – which tend to be more adversarial in

structure – seem to be favoured by men. Indeed, male journalists appear to be more aggressive both in their questions at the beginning of the interview and through the use of rhetorical questions and of negative-interrogatives. In so doing, male IRs appear to run the risk of losing the neutralistic posture and ending up in aggressive interrogations more than their female counterparts. In contrast, female journalists appear to be less adversarial also by disfavoured overlapping speech and avoiding stand-alone statements.

Undoubtedly, more data need to be analysed to further verify what has emerged both in terms of the waiving of rules of conduct and with reference to the differences between male and female interviewers that have emerged. Presuppositions embedded in leading questions also need to be dedicated attention in terms of the lexical items involved; indeed, for want of space, in the present study the focus has been placed on syntactic structures and rhetorical patterns rather than on single lexical items; yet, a number of other aspects were identified in the corpus that call for attention in further studies, for example (a) personal pronouns, bearing in mind inclusive and exclusive *we*; (b) adjectives and adverbs of manner, like *respectful/ly*, *serious/ly*, and *fair/ly*, as well as their positioning in the interactional flow; (c) the actualization of modality, from deontic to dynamic and epistemic and, most interestingly, evidentiality. Last, but not least, this study has focused on one-to-one interviews; attention needs to be dedicated also to the language of panels, featuring discussions and debate among IEs and also calling into question the audience, when present.

Finally, understanding the world of broadcast interviews should not be exclusive prerogative of the news-making profession or of scholarly studies. Indeed, decoding the Q&A interface also enables the general public to navigate the online and offline sea of broadcast media in an informed way, bearing in mind that, as long as journalistic interviews will be offered, the venting of perspective and subjectivity – even if in adversarial terms – will also be available, along with the sharing of information, which lies at the heart of journalism itself.

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Vaccines discourse: A diachronic case study

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ABSTRACT

Since the pandemic, vaccinations have become an issue that has triggered much public debate. Although several scholars have focused on the discourse of social media and traditional news media, parliamentary discourse on this issue has received little attention. Using the Hansard Corpus of speeches collected from the House of Commons between 1803 and 2005, and a recent corpus of speeches on Covid-19, we examine how vaccines have been presented in British Parliament over the years. Taking into account the main peaks in which the word *vaccine* occurs and observing frequency, collocates, and phraseology, we trace significant differences in discourse on vaccines, reflecting changing values and differences in the respective arguments of science and political power. While in the early 19th century the focus was on the vaccine itself, starting from the 1950s' attention was more on research and investment. The turn of the century witnesses negative attitudes towards vaccines, while the pandemic shows an increasing need for promotional discourse.

Keywords: health policy discourse, diachronic discourse analysis, parliamentary debates, vaccine.

1. Introduction

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, vaccinations have become a crucial issue, leading to extreme polarisation in public debate with the discourse of science as a key element. The World Health Organization has talked about an 'infodemic' of published output during the pandemic. The urgent need for diagnostic and therapeutic solutions has led to a dramatic surge in

scientific publishing (Hyland – Jiang 2021), with research discourse gaining significant prominence. In order to promote their work, researchers have been exploiting all tools of hyperbolic and promotional language, boosting aspects of their research, such as certainty, contribution, novelty and potential. At the same time, public discourse was called to keep track of the rapid knowledge development and to share the most recent discoveries with the general public, while shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. Several scholars have focused on public attitudes towards vaccines in social media and their connection to fake news (Thelwall et al. 2022; Atehortua – Patino 2021; Liu – Liu 2021) in blogs and fora (Curry – Pérez-Paredes 2021; Semino et al. 2023), and in traditional news media (Lurie et al. 2022). Jiang and Hyland's (2022) study, for example, concentrated on a more recent news reporting throughout 2020. The study revealed the evolving interest shown by the media during the pandemic: in the initial months, news primarily revolved around the virus's symptoms, while topics concerning disease management, including guidelines, protocols, and eventually vaccines, gained more prominence over time. Others have focused on the first public concerns against vaccination during the Victorian Age by exploring anti-vaccination pamphlets and publications (Hardaker et al. 2024).

To the best of our knowledge, however, the debate on this issue within parliamentary discourse has received little attention. Yet, parliamentary debates offer plenty of opportunities to both highlight the arguments used for or against specific policies and to explore the role of scientific arguments in policy debates (Weingart 1999; van Dijk 2003; Ilie 2017; Qadir – Syväterä 2021). There is no denying that political debates have always played a key role in the development of health policies. This makes the analysis of parliamentary debates an important source of information in tracing how scientific discourse is represented in political decisions. Examining language choices, framing techniques, and discursive practices employed by politicians in relation to their decisions regarding scientific knowledge can help evaluate their impact on public perception. Moreover, exploring their changes in attitudes towards science may also shed light on the role of scientific knowledge in public perception across centuries.

The present study aims to address this issue by investigating lexical choices in debates on vaccines in the British Parliament from a diachronic discourse-analytical perspective. Our analysis centres on the representation of vaccines from their first introduction in the British political debate at the beginning of the 19th century. By looking at the word *vaccine* in context, and at its use in parliamentary debates, we can trace changing attitudes towards

vaccines and provide insights into how scientific information has been integrated into public debates across the centuries. The study, thus, addresses one simple research questions: Since the beginning of the 19th century, how have parliamentary debates reflected attitudes towards vaccines and science in general?

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the background to the study by briefly tracing a historical profile of vaccines and vaccination practices. Section 3 presents the corpus-based discourse analytical methodology. Sections 4 and 5 look at the word *vaccine* in a historical perspective tracing its development along the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Section 6 focuses on the debate during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the conclusion summarizes the outcomes of the analysis.

2. Background on vaccines

The practice of inoculating material taken from smallpox lesions in the skin or nostrils of susceptible (healthy) individuals (“variola”) was practiced in various parts of Asia for many centuries. Smallpox was known in India and China BC, but it was only convincingly described in Europe until 580 AD by Gregory of Tours. In the 6th century a smallpox epidemic started from North Africa and reached Arabia and Europe, then again in the following centuries, and the term “variola” was used in the Latin translation of a Persian medical monograph around 1050 AD (Behbehani 1983). Smallpox was reintroduced in Europe by crusaders returning from the Holy Land, and appeared in England in the 16th century, at the same time that it was introduced to the New World probably by Spanish expeditions and slave ships. It is estimated that smallpox caused 400,000 deaths each year in Europe, and many millions worldwide since then. Many feared the disease not only for its mortality (about 15% of those infected) but also for blindness or disfiguration of the survivors.

Variola probably started in China and spread to most Asian countries. In Turkey it was generally practiced by scratching the arm with a needle and rubbing the liquid from the pustule of a patient with uncomplicated smallpox. This practice of variola was communicated to the Royal Society on several occasions, most notably with a letter by Dr. Timoni, of Italian origin, serving as physician to the British Ambassador in Constantinople (now Istanbul) in 1714. However, these reports aroused little interest until Lady Mary Wortley Montagu – herself victim of smallpox

which caused severe disfiguration – reached Constantinople in 1717 as wife of the new British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Edward W. Montagu, and became very interested in the variolation. She had both her children variolated, one for the first time in Britain. This event sparked the interest of medical practitioners and the royal circles, who sponsored a human experiment on six condemned prisoners (the Royal experiment, see Silverstein – Miller 1981). The results of this and other variolations were so impressive that the Princess of Wales had her daughters variolated in 1722. A few years later the Royal Society publicly endorsed the practice, which however did not gain wide acceptance since it carried a certain risk of contracting the disease and passing it to other healthy individuals. The Rev. Cotton Mather of Boston, unaware of Lady Montagu's campaign for variolation in Britain, read Timoni's letter and urged the local physicians to variolate after an outbreak of smallpox in 1721, but this started a fierce opposition from doctors and authorities, on the grounds that variolation was the deliberate infection of healthy subjects, putting them in danger of a serious disease, an offense to God and mankind (Behbehani 1983).

Continuous outbreaks of smallpox caused the shift of popular sentiment, seeking protection from the disease, leading to large scale variolation across Europe and to the establishment of a Smallpox and Inoculation Hospital in London in 1746. The practice was widespread also in the American colonies, and Washington's troops were variolated in 1775; the rising concerns of adverse effects led many colonies to pass anti-variolation laws, and this was probably the cause of frequent resurgence of smallpox among colonial troops, whereas the British soldiers were protected.

Edward Jenner induced a paradigm change by devising vaccination, i.e., the immunization (protection) of human beings with the use of an attenuated (or non-pathogenic) form of agent, thus becoming also the precursor of immunology and preventive medicine. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and a country doctor in Berkeley, received the degree of Doctor in Medicine from St. Andrews in 1792, and was already interested in studying how milkmaids who developed cowpox lesions were protected against smallpox. After years of study, he decided to perform his clinical experiment by immunizing James Phipps (an 8-year-old boy from Berkeley) with material from the cowpox hand lesions of a milkmaid. He did not use cow's material since he knew that not all of it transferred to humans, so he preferred human-to-human transmission, with material which was attenuated by the passage. He then infected (variolated) the boy 6 weeks later with smallpox fluid, without any consequence, demonstrating protection.

The paper describing this and other observations was submitted to the Royal Society in 1797, and refused on the grounds of insufficient data. Jenner went on with experiments and published a monograph in 1798, and three books in the following years. He coined the term *Variolae vaccinae* (cow's smallpox) and the word Vaccination was introduced in a pamphlet by surgeon R. Dunning in 1800. Jenner had shown that his procedure (vaccination) was providing long-lasting protection (Phipps lived into old age and was challenged with smallpox on several occasions) and was safer than variolation. Jenner's protocol was adopted by a number of physicians with success, but this stirred also fierce opposition by others, either because they did not believe that cowpox and smallpox were related or because they disputed the safety of using material of animal origin. Despite opposition, about 100,000 people were vaccinated in Britain by 1801, and Jenner petitioned the House of Commons for funding further experiments, while also fighting against other doctors who claimed priority in the discovery of vaccination. The field of opponents was still strong a century later, but the practice was recognized by several countries and Jenner was awarded prizes and honours. Vaccination was introduced in all major countries within a decade from its inception, variolation was stopped in Britain in 1840 by an act of Parliament, and in 1853 vaccination was made compulsory under penalty. The theory that the Government could constrain the individual for the needs of the social community, favoured in the German Empire, was fiercely opposed in U.K. so the compulsory vaccination, after a long debate, was abolished in 1898. The World Health Organization in 1967 enforced a program for smallpox eradication, successfully concluded in 1979, and smallpox was declared extinct (certificate of eradication) in 1980 (Behbehani 1983).

Another chapter of the vaccine story was opened by Louis Pasteur, himself a chemist, who promoted the "germ theory" of diseases, after discovering that microorganisms were responsible for fermentation. In the second half of the 19th century bacteria were recognized, and methods to grow them in culture were developed. They were then identified by microscope and physical methods. Pasteur adopted the *in vitro* passage of bacteria to attenuate their infectivity and used the resulting material to immunize healthy animals. He thus prepared fowl cholera vaccine in 1879, and anthrax vaccine in 1880, and adopted the word "vaccine" as a tribute to Jenner, for any protective inoculation. He developed also rabies vaccine (in 1885) and the sterilization method known as pasteurization, to preserve foods from rotting. The other leading advocate of the germ theory, Robert Koch, identified the agent of tuberculosis in 1882. From 1908 to 1921 Calmette

and Guérin at the Pasteur Institute in Lille, cultured and passaged several hundred times a strain of *Mycobacterium* derived from cow, obtaining a mutant type devoid of virulence, employed for the BCG vaccination against tuberculosis, which became in use after 1945. Nowadays this is one of the most widely used but also most controversial vaccines. It has been credited with immunostimulant properties and tried also in many other conditions, including cancer. Pasteur predicted that it was in the power of men to make microbial maladies vanish from the earth – a prophecy still only partially fulfilled (Oldstone 2010). The successes of Pasteur led Walter Reed, a doctor of the U.S. Army, to study and characterize as a virus the agent of yellow fever. In 1900 mosquitoes were identified as carriers of the virus, and a vaccine was finally developed around 1937 by Max Theiler at the Rockefeller Institute (NY).

Other vaccination procedures had been developed in the meantime. In 1890 von Behring (first Nobel prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1901) and Kitasato in Berlin observed that animals exposed to cultures of tetanus and diphtheria produced “antitoxins” in their serum, able to neutralize the toxins causing the diseases. This was the basis for serum therapy and the concept of antibodies proposed by Paul Ehrlich, but also the starting point for immunization with the toxoids (inactivated toxins) to protect the recipients, made available in 1924 and then refined and used to vaccinate soldiers in WWII from 1939. Now the toxoids are administered together with acellular Pertussis vaccine, a combination available from 1992.

Another step forward was made by Jonas Salk who tried to use killed virus to prepare an inactivated vaccine for poliomyelitis in 1952, in order to minimize the risks that a live attenuated vaccine might mutate and revert to the virulent parental strain. His research was funded by the March of Dimes campaign started by President F. D. Roosevelt, himself a victim of polio, and resulted in the first vaccine in 1955, whose success was aided by the vaccination received by R&R star Elvis Presley during the popular TV Ed Sullivan Show in 1956. In 1957 Albert Sabin introduced the oral live attenuated polio vaccine, which was adopted for the eradication campaign started by the WHO at global level in 1963, despite the possibility of recirculation of this virus and its revertants. All live (even attenuated) vaccines carry the risk of lethal consequences in severely immunocompromised hosts.

Other controversies arose during the developments of newer vaccines, which included those against measles, mumps, rubella (from 1971 formulated together as MMR), chickenpox (varicella), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningitis, pneumococcus and *Hemophilus influenza* – most

of these due to the work of Maurice Hilleman, at Bristol-Myers Squibb and then at Merck pharmaceutical companies. The concerns regarded the use of Thimerosal, an ethylmercury-based preservative used since the 1930s in many vaccines. This was investigated from 1997 until its ban in 2004, for alleged neurodevelopmental disorders including autism (Offit 2007). This campaign followed the controversy on measles vaccine and autism, started in 1998 by an article in the *Lancet* (Wakefield et al. 1998) reporting this spurious association, and reinvigorated by a second report by the same author in 2002. Both papers were strongly criticized as flawed and then withdrawn in 2010, resulting in the cancellation of the author from the UK medical register for deliberate falsification of data. However, the heated debate sparked by the publication resulted in the failure of the campaign for measles eradication in Europe, and caused a surge of local epidemics. Other less substantiated claims of vaccine damages had been made for whole cell Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination in the late '70s and then also for acellular Pertussis vaccines in the early 2000. Many other unwarranted scares have been raised for substances contained in vaccines, mainly flu vaccines, such as aluminium or squalene and other molecules used as adjuvants (stimulating stronger immune responses).

Technological advances have been made during the past 45 years, with the use of recombinant DNA methods to produce pure proteins for immunization (e.g., hepatitis B), or incorporation of the DNA instructions for producing them into living organisms (preferentially virus or bacteria rendered harmless to humans) which are then injected as vaccine vectors (McCann et al. 2022). This last condition was adopted for the Astra-Zeneca ChAdOx-1 vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 (now withdrawn) as well as for other COVID-19 vaccines, and the two licensed Ebola virus vaccines. The most widely used COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by Pfizer and developed by BionTech is based on the delivery of messenger RNA coding for the viral protein able to induce protective responses: the molecule is taken up by the human cells to produce the protein for a limited time, and is recognized by the immune system with production of antibodies. The advantages of the new techniques are the absence of infectivity (no living pathogens are used), lower costs for mass production, the possible fast availability for variant pathogen antigens (as in the case of the dual mRNA vaccine for COVID-19 with the Omicron variant) and for DNA the long durability even in ambient conditions. Obviously, these new formulations have reignited the debate upon safety and the extent of pre-authorization testing, as well as possible long-term effects.

3. Methods

In order to carry out this study of parliamentary debates on vaccines, we divided the process into two phases. In the first phase, we analysed the use of the term *vaccine* from 1803 to 2005, then we looked at its use during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2021).

For the first phase, we retrieved texts from the Hansard Corpus, available on English Corpora.¹ The Hansard Corpus contains nearly every speech given in the British Parliament from 1803 to 2005 with a total of almost 1.6 billion words. Before carrying out a concordance analysis, we adopted the ‘chart’ function available on English Corpora and examined the relative frequency of *vaccine* over ten-year time spans. We then inputted the data into Excel to visualize the trend through the use of graphs, and selected the decades with the highest peaks for a detailed analysis.

Overall, our corpus consists of 341 texts, 49988 tokens and 4918 types. As previously mentioned, after having observed the peaks in the use of *vaccine*, we selected the following time-spans: 1803-1810, 1900-1910, 1950-1960, and 2000-2005. For each of these time-spans we selected 100 random speeches, when available, and copied and pasted each of them individually onto a .txt file. This was achieved thanks to the random sampling function available on English Corpora, where users can select the number of instances of the selected node word for each time-span under analysis. For the 1803-1810 time-span there were only 41 speeches that contained the word *vaccine*, meaning that we collected all the available instances without using the randomizing function.

Our data was then analysed with the support of AntConc 3.5.8 (Anthony 2020) software tool. This tool allowed us to generate a contrastive keyword list for each time-span under analysis: this was achieved by contrasting the wordlist for each time-span with the remaining others, which were used as a reference corpus. Specifically, we contrasted:

- 1) 1803-1810 [time-span 1] against 1900-1910 [time-span2], 1950-1960 [time-span 3], and 2000-2010 [time-span 4]
- 2) time-span 2 against time-span 1, time-span 3, and time-span 4
- 3) time-span 3 against time-span1, and time-span 2, and time-span 4
- 4) time-span 4 against time-span1, and time-span 2, and time-span 3.

Keyword lists allowed us to detect which word forms were statistically significant according to the log likelihood parameter and p value < 0.05,

¹ English Corpora available at: <https://www.english-corpora.org/hansard/>.

while still having a picture of the ‘aboutness’ (Bondi – Scott 2010) of the speeches regarding vaccines. Then, we carried out a concordance analysis of the word form *vaccine* looking at patterns of collocation (the tendency of the word to co-occur with other lexical elements) and semantic preference (the tendency to co-occur with lexical elements sharing semantic features, see (Sinclair 1991). This allowed us to manually identify phraseological patterns and, when possible, areas of meaning that dominated the debate at any particular time.

For the second phase of our analysis, we focused on Covid-19 vaccine debate and collected data from the English Parliamentary ParlaMint 2.1 database available on Sketch Engine.² This contains 552,103 British Parliament debates from 2015 to March 2021 and accounts for a total of 111,980,128 tokens and 100,616,051 types. Here we selected all instances containing the word *vaccine* in combination with *Covid-19*, *Covid*, and coronavirus and selected the first 200 random concordances. Following the same procedure of our first phase of analysis, we uploaded our texts on AntConc 3.5.8 where we could:

- a) generate a contrastive keyword list using the 1803-2005 corpus as a reference;
- b) carry out a concordance analysis of the selected items.

As the pandemic outbreak began in February 2020, the data contains only speeches belonging to the first year of the pandemic, when the vaccine was in its early stage of production. Table 1 provides the reader with further details on the collected corpus.

Table 1. Number of the texts, tokens, and types for each time-span under analysis

Time-span	Number of texts	Number of tokens	Number of types
1803-1810	41 [Tories]	9360	1367
1900-1910	100 [Conservative]	11812	1645
1950-1960	100 [15 Labour & 85 Conservative]	11263	1807
2000-2005	100 [21 Labour & 79 Conservative]	17553	2947
2021-2022	N/A	8202	1556

² ParlaMint corpus available at: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/parlamint-corpora-of-parliamentary-debates/>.

4. Quantitative analysis: Diachronic trend of *vaccine* in British Parliament speeches

Figure 1 below shows the diachronic frequency per million words (pmw) of the use of the word *vaccine* in British Parliament over the years (Hansard Corpus).

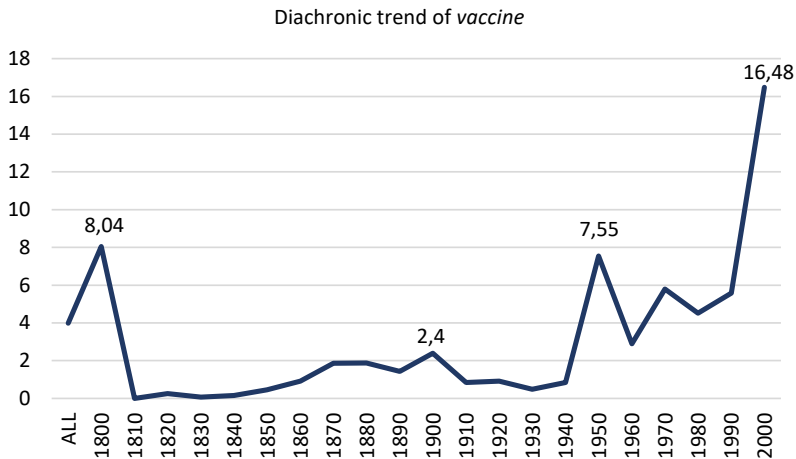


Figure 1. Diachronic trend of *vaccine* from 1803 to 2005 (frequency pmw)

The graph (Fig. 1) shows four main peaks, namely 1803-1810 (8.04 hits pmw), 1900-1910 (2.4 pmw), 1950-1960 (7.55 pmw), and 2000-2005 (16.48 pmw). As can be seen, the two highest peaks are reached at the two far ends of the graph: the first one (1803) coincides with the small-pox vaccine discovery, while the last one (2000) might suggest an increase in the number of vaccines available. The frequency of the word form also increases sharply with the 21st century.

Before exploring the use of the word *vaccine* in the four peaks of Fig. 1 in greater detail, it would be useful to consider a keyword list for each time span under analysis. This allows us to get a first insight on the general trends surrounding the vaccines' debate for each period under analysis. In Table 2 we have reported the first ten most frequent keywords for each time span, excluding function words.

From the first lexical items appearing at the top of each keyword list, we can get a general idea of the changes in trends over the years. In the first three time-spans, the main focus is on the vaccine itself (e.g., *inoculation*, *lymph*, *tuberculosis*), while in the years 2000-2005, the high use of *we* suggests the central importance of speakers (and probably their rhetoric). Looking

at the general keyword list of each time-span, we notice that in 1803-1810, the focus is on the vaccine's discovery (e.g., *inoculation, discovery, small pox*), while in 1900-1910 there seems to be a higher use of vaccine-related technicalities (e.g., *lymph, glycerated*) and origin (e.g., *calf, calves*), as well as a need for clarification (e.g., *beg, ask*). In 1950-1960, attention is on the disease that the vaccines are meant to cure (e.g., *tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, disease*), research, prevention (e.g., *preventive*) and on the presence of other medical institutions (e.g., *hospitals*). In 2000-2005 attention is still on diseases (e.g., *aids, flu*), medical institutions (e.g., *nhs*), but also on consequences of the vaccine (e.g., *damage, autism*), money (e.g., *million, bill*) and people.

5. Collocation analysis for *vaccine* from 1803 to 2005

The analysis in the present section is based on the diachronic corpus of vaccine speeches that we collected from Hansard. As the corpus is strongly focused on vaccines, relative frequencies are better expressed per thousand words (ptw).

a) 1803-1810

The first period under analysis coincides with the first years of the smallpox vaccine trial. Results show that reported speeches on the vaccine were delivered by members of the Tory party (See Table 1). The main debate in British Parliament revolves around the effects and reliability of the smallpox vaccine *inoculation* (33 hits/35 ptw) and *vaccine matter* (7/7.47 ptw).

On the one hand, members mostly report its positive effects (e.g., *beneficial, good, salutary*), its link to *progress* and its importance within the political scenario (e.g., *its real importance, and as such consistent with the general character and liberality of this country*), while negative effects (e.g., *baneful*) are mostly described in relation to the disease itself, hence reinforcing the efficacy of the vaccine. However, side effects of the vaccine (e.g., *soon after, since...*), such as death or inefficacy, are occasionally reported citing vague sources of information (*the variety of opinions, it was said that, various rumours...* See 1-2), or else they are imputed to its misuse (e.g., *imprudent management*), deficiency (e.g., *dissemination of spurious and improper vaccine matter*), or to people's skepticism towards a national discovery (Example 3).

- (1) The numerous cases which have come tinder my own observation, **since the introduction of the vaccine inoculation**, have effectually

persuaded me of its advantageous effects, notwithstanding **the variety of opinions** it has excited, **and the several instances** which have been adduced to demonstrate its failure (Matthews 1806)

- (2) I remember perfectly well, that **soon after the discovery of vaccine inoculation, it was said that** many more people had died of the small pox than before; this however, was found to be entirely owing to the patients going into the open air, and catching infection at a time when they were most susceptible of it (Willberforce 1806)
- (3) I am not at all surprised that the practice of **vaccine inoculation has made so very little progress in this the very country where it originated**, as it is owing to one of those curious circumstances which arise from the state and principles of human nature that new discoveries are viewed with greater caution and surprise in those places where they are first made, than in those countries where they are afterwards disseminated: While in other countries great labour and pains are bestowed in cultivating and improving a discovery, and in putting it into practice for the benefit of the human race, it is often found that the reputation of its original success dies gradually away in the very country which gave it birth (Willberforce 1807)

On the other hand, from these few excerpts, trust seems to be a key issue, as members of Parliament – specifically those belonging to the Conservative party – seem to demand (e.g., *enquire*) information from medical experts and professionals (e.g., *London Vaccine Institution, Royal College of Physicians, College of Surgeons*). The need for scientific reports (e.g., *report their observations, evidence in its support*) shows members' potential awareness of misinformation and its consequences. In particular, members explicitly refer to the necessity of relying on "the respectable body of the Royal College of Physicians" rather than on the "incompetency" of a parliamentary committee (Example 4).

- (4) I must beg leave to differ from him, as I think a committee of this house would be less competent to form a correct and sound judgment upon the subject, than medical men would be: **Their incompetency would be felt and considered by the public, and consequently an opinion from them, as to the good or bad effects of the vaccine inoculation would have much less weight on their minds**: It would not tend to allay their suspicions, nor administer a guidance for their future conduct: Far different, however, would be the effect of a report

proceeding from that learned and respectable body, the Royal College of Physicians, most formally called upon by parliament. (House of Commons 1806)

b) 1900-1910

With the expansion of vaccination policies, trust issues become more prominent. The smallpox vaccine is still a debated issue in the House of Commons in the early 20th century, at least in the voice of different members of the Conservative party, even if the debate has been extended by further developments in scientific research towards the end of the 19th century.

Collocations point to the establishment of the practice and the discussion of its origins and potential risks. *Vaccine lymph* (42 /35.55 ptw), *vaccine establishment* (19 /16.08 ptw), *vaccine institution* (12/10.15 ptw) and *vaccine institute* (23/19.47 ptw) are the most frequent clusters containing the term *vaccine*. The high frequency of vaccine establishments shows a clear rise in interest in research and in the regularization of the vaccine. *Vaccine lymph*, instead, stands within the central debate of its reliability. Question verbs (e.g., *beg to ask, ask, enquire* – 98 hits/82.96 ptw) and the conjunction *whether* (62/52.48 ptw) introduce doubts on the vaccine which revolve around its origin (e.g., *genuineness of the vaccine derived from the animal...*), its lymph (e.g., *of the bacterial impurity of the vaccine lymph now or recently supplied for vaccination; colonies of germs, rendering their use improper for vaccination*), and the presence of potential diseases as side effects (e.g., *cancer, meningitis, syphilis*).

MPs also report cases where the vaccine was *contaminated, abnormal, or not successful*, showing fear and mistrust towards it. In one case, this is also enhanced by its association to death (e.g., *killed by vaccine*) as the MP reports name and surname of the person who has allegedly died from the vaccine, demanding a scientific explanation for this correlation (5).

- (5) **young woman named Rose Sandall, residing with her mother at 28, New Queen-street, Bedminster, Bristol, was constrained by her employers, Messrs: Mavdon and Sons, of Bristol, to be vaccinated in February last; is he aware that the vaccination was not successful** in the medical sense of the word, but resulted in the formation of proud flesh at the place of insertion, sores in the foot, and general illness and emaciation, disabling her from working; if he is aware that she has died and that a post-mortem examination has revealed symptoms of

cancer; and, since it is known that in some cases vaccination produces cancer, **whether he will take steps to insure full inquiry by persons in no way responsible for the production of the vaccine used in this case into the nature and origin of this vaccine?** (Lupton 1809)

MPs require transparency and further investigation on the “nature and origin of this vaccine”, as there seems to be much uncertainty on its scientific evidence (e.g., *that it was then impossible to ascertain by microscopic examination whether lymph contains the virus of syphilis or not*). Quite likely, fear and mistrust of the vaccine are also triggered by its animal origin, as members ask the Local Government Board to exclude vaccinated veal from the House of Commons’ Dining Room.

Reponses on matters regarding the vaccine lymph are supported by reporting voices of medical professionals (e.g., *Dr Cadell, Dr Rao, vaccine institution, as superintendent of vaccination at the New Town Dispensary*) to enhance credibility. This is followed by explanations and scientific evidence on how the lymph is obtained to reassure other MPs (e.g., *the usual method of obtaining lymph for use at the national vaccine establishment is by vaccinating calves with vaccine lymph obtained from children*) Example 6 below provides an instance of how the President of the Local Government Board describes the production of the vaccine.

- (6) THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD (Mr: WALTER LONG,) Bristol, S: **Dr: Rao tested the properties of glycerine and lanoline in eliminating extraneous micro-organisms from vaccine lymph:** His experiments showed that under the conditions of a tropical country neither medium **could be trusted always to render the lymph absolutely sterile**, but lanoline was superior to glycerine, inasmuch as it interfered less with the proper activity of the lymph in **vaccination**: On the other hand, the bacteriologist of the Local Government Board has found that under the conditions of this country glycerine is better than lanoline for the purpose of eliminating extraneous micro-organisms from the **lymph** and does not unduly interfere with the proper activity of the lymph: I do not at present propose to make any change in the methods adopted by the Local Government Board for preserving vaccine lymph (Long 1902)

As can be seen, in this case, the description becomes more detailed than in the previous century and is also supported by the use of technical terms (e.g., *glycerine, lanoline, micro-organisms*) and research verbs (e.g., *test, show*).

c) 1950-1960

Results show that the majority of speeches are from members of the Conservative party, while speeches by Labour members represent 10% of instances and are all concentrated in the year 1950. In this decade, the word *vaccine* (145/128.64 ptw) is mostly preceded by specifying nouns which define the type of vaccine, such as *BCG*, used against tuberculosis, *poliomyelitis*, *influenza*, and *foot and mouth* (35/31.07 ptw). This shows medical progress and an increase in research investment.

There seems to be a positive attitude towards the tuberculosis vaccine, which is mostly mentioned by the Labour party in 1950. This is confirmed by the use of verbs introducing positive opinions on the matter (*we hope to get vaccine, we regard treatment of tuberculosis as number one priority among, I am glad to say that it has been possible to improve the position...*) and by reporting transparency on its production (e.g., *thanks largely to the advance of medical knowledge*). Positive effects of the vaccine are also mentioned: these are supported by the use of positive adjectives (e.g., *BCG vaccine offers great opportunity for advance; it gives us a much greater opportunity of meeting the*).

Vaccines are starting to be associated with prevention (e.g., *purely preventive, preventive work, vaccine that will prevent influenza* – for a total of 17 hits/ 15.09ptw), protection (as shown by verbs related to the semantic field of battle e.g., *combat, tackle*), and with the word *immunization* (for a total of 9 hits altogether/7.99 ptw – See Example 7).

- (7) Dr: Stross asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works, as representing the Lord President of the Council, whether he has noted the experiments carried out last year in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, **whereby immunisation against influenza is achieved by the use of dried, live vaccine, polytype A, A1 and B; and what progress of a similar nature has been made in Britain, and with what results** (Stross 1955)

There is also an increase in reporting scientific evidence and statistics of patients (e.g., *3 per cent, 1200 individuals took part in the trial, results are encouraging, further testing* – 20 cases/ 17.75 ptw) while demanding further research on existing vaccines (e.g., *Medical Research Council may show whether there is any practicable alternative to the use of monkeys in preparing a poliomyelitis vaccine*). Furthermore, the word *vaccine* is associated with financial aspects (e.g., *it is cheaper to produce...* – 5/4.43ptw), which represent an important factor when carrying out new experimental studies.

Additionally, few side effects (3 cases) are reported in relation to poliomyelitis (e.g., *deleterious effects arising from the use of the recently-discovered vaccine for poliomyelitis treatment*). The debate also manifests uncertainty, as the value of this vaccine had not yet been satisfactorily scientifically established: see for example the tendency to address the issue with direct questions (*Can he say what is the nature of this vaccine, how it is produced, what it consists of and how it is administered?*).

d) 2000-2005

Excerpts from this time span characterize the discourse of Labour party members, while the debated vaccines are those against meningitis, influenza, MMR, and AIDS. What seems to be a key issue in this period is the awareness of consequences that might derive from vaccines. As a matter of fact, *vaccine damage* is the most frequent collocation (21/11.96 ptw), which in some cases (5/2.84 ptw) collocates with the category of people who have endured consequences from the vaccine (e.g., *victims of, people suffering from, disable from*). The collocation of *vaccine damage* with *payment* (14/7.97 ptw) refers to the government's compensation for personal injury derived from the vaccine. *Autism* (19/10.82 ptw), which appears also in the keyword list of the decade under analysis (see Table 2), collocates with *vaccine*, reporting a possible connection between vaccines and injuries (e.g., *a link between MMR vaccine and autism*). In one case, issues on vaccine-damage are related to *anti-vaccine campaigns* which are also mentioned by members of Parliament as a *prominent public issue*.

In this time-span, *vaccine* also collocates with words related to research (e.g., *develop, trials, the data we have suggest that...* – 58/33.04 ptw), suggesting an increase in attention towards scientific investigation, as it appears to be a top priority to reduce diseases (e.g., *reduce the spread, need vaccines...* 29/16.52 ptw). Moreover, verbs of process highlight the research carried out to tackle such issue (e.g., *improve, review, 14/- 7.97 ptw*).

Furthermore, one semantic area associated with vaccines in this period is the area of economic considerations. In fact, *vaccine* collocates with lexical items belonging to the field of finance (e.g., *spending, money, total, £ 15 million a year at...* 19 – 10.82 ptw), thus suggesting a turn in government investment in research.

The importance of science is also central in the debate against misinformation, where MP Curry (8) ironically addresses non-professional

sources of information (*we have a handful of iconoclasts, we have Ministers bringing to bear the canon of, we have the press seizing on...*).

- (8) I am glad that the Minister for Public Health is here, because I wish to refer to the **measles, mumps and rubella vaccine**: All the **players** are on scene: We have a vast majority of **established scientific opinion** in favour of the multiple vaccine: **We have a handful of iconoclasts** who say that it is causing serious disease in infants: **We have Ministers bringing to bear the canon of** established Government scientific advice **and we have the press seizing on the minority** view, with stories that are unashamedly emotional: **If Ministers believe their scientific advice**, and they have no reason not to, they are condemned to be reassuring in the words that they utter to the public; they have no alternative (Curry 2001)

6. Collocation analysis the corona virus vaccine 2020-2021

During the pandemic, parliamentary debates on the development of the vaccine reflect the urgency of the situation and the polarization of the debate by usually taking a line that strongly supports government policy. As the context shows ambivalent attitudes towards science, it becomes necessary to boost confidence in the vaccine and in the country's ability to manage the issue.

The key topic is of course the Covid-19 vaccine. Results show 410 hits (66.03 pmw, a much higher frequency than the other time-spans considered) for *vaccine* co-occurring with *Coronavirus*, *Covid-19*, and *Covid* in the whole corpus. February 2020 – March 2021 coincide with the first phase of the pandemic, hence vaccines were presented as an option to tackle the disease and they were beginning to be administered.

Table 3 below shows the keyword list of the year 2020-2021 in contrast with the 1803-2005 corpus.

By looking at the most relevant items (Table 3), we see that *covid* and *coronavirus* are unsurprisingly at the top of the list (229 hits – 279.20 ptw). The word *UK* (45/54.86 ptw) is frequently cited in relation to the vaccine, as MPs remark upon the fact that the nation plays an important role in the distribution of the vaccine. *Development*, *success*, *access*, *rollout* (77/ 93.87 ptw) are all related to the production of the vaccine, suggesting the different aspects that speeches focus on, namely its production, its accessibility, and progress. In particular, issues of accessibility show the centrality of people

as one of the Government's priorities in the vaccine administration (e.g., *the most vulnerable...*, *refugees* – 12/14.63 ptw).

Table 3. Keyword list of the 2020-2021 corpus in contrast with the 1803-2005 reference corpus

Keyword	Freq.	Keyness
<i>Covid</i>	162	+637.59
<i>coronavirus</i>	67	+263.02
<i>UK</i>	45	+133.99
<i>development</i>	42	+79.02
<i>world</i>	43	+78.9
<i>access</i>	30	+75.7
<i>news</i>	15	+58.8
<i>roll</i>	16	+55.42
<i>support</i>	32	+49.87
<i>we</i>	112	+47.37

The term *world* (43/52.42 ptw) highlights how the Covid-19 vaccine campaign places itself within a global context, emphasizing the international dimension of the problem and the need for a universal solution. The emphasis falls on how the solution requires collaboration with other countries (*72 countries support the campaign to develop...International collaboration is absolutely vital, 470 sites in 34 different countries are racing to find a vaccine for covid-19* – 17 cases).

News is not used to report media voices, but to refer to the outcomes of research and the vaccine's development (e.g., *it is great/excellent/positive/encouraging news...* 15/18.28 ptw) which already suggests a shift in discourse compared to the previous time spans. There seems to be a more explicit attitude towards this specific vaccine campaign.

The use of *we* is consistent with the trend of the early 2000s, confirming the central role of the speaker. In particular, it is mostly followed by the verbs *are* (28/34.12 ptw) and *have* (26/31.69 ptw). *We are* is mostly followed by present participles (e.g., *we are helping to get the vaccine to those...* 16 cases out of 28) or by past participles (*we are actively involved in...* 5 cases out of 28), highlighting the speakers' continuous work and involvement in the vaccine matter. This cluster is also followed by adjectives (e.g., *We are proud to be pioneering trials in this...* 7 cases out of 28) showing speakers' feelings and emotions. *We have* is mostly followed by past participles (e.g., *We have already announced that we will roll out..., we have had constructive discussions with the*

EU on finding a vaccine... – 16 cases out of 26), once again showing the active involvement and action of the speakers.

Moving on to the concordance of *vaccine* (194/236.52ptw), we notice that it is mostly addressed in terms of its production (e.g., *manufacturing, development* – 76/92.66 ptw), which is intertwined with research (e.g., *research* – 13/15.84 ptw) and investment (e.g., *heavily investing in the development of..., have committed £...to rapidly develop...-24/29.26 ptw*). The use of the progressive form (e.g., *we are seeing, progressing* – 7/8.53 ptw) reinforces the continuity and consistency of work and research in its production, while the use of words and adverbs related to time (e.g., *rapidly, a matter of urgency, quickly, nimbly and dynamically* – 12/14.63 ptw) convey a sense of urgency due to the critical pandemic situation.

When compared to the 1803-2005 corpus, members of Parliament seem to expose their view on this specific vaccine in a decisive and marked way. The use of mostly positive adjectives and boosters helps convey a positive attitude toward the vaccine (e.g., *the best way out of this coronavirus vaccine remains the pandemic, it was fantastic news the success of covid, on the top of the positive news the launch of the Covid-19...it is fantastic we soon have...vaccine roll-out is the most important economic lever*). Such adjectives might contribute to the promotional role of discourse regarding the administration of the Covid-19 vaccine. The adoption of a vaccine is often presented as the only solution to overcome the pandemic and the lockdown circumstances (9). The representation of the vaccine “campaign” is also reinforced by the use of words belonging to the military field (e.g., *we have launched a vaccine task force, combat, our plans for..., strategy, fight*).

- (9) **Any restrictive measure that has been implemented to fight coronavirus must go** when a vaccine has been developed and distributed among much of the population. (Lewer 2020)

The fact that the Covid-19 vaccine campaign might be presented through forms of promotional discourse is also confirmed by the use of some superlatives and positive adjectives when presenting the role of the UK in the vaccine rollout (e.g., *the first country in the world to have approved, we are the biggest funders*), highlighting their primacy and leading role (*the UK is leading the way in*) in the campaign. They also address and acknowledge the scientists involved in its development once more through positive adjectives that highlight their competence (e.g., *our brilliant scientists and our brilliant science base-* 10/12.19ptw) in order to reassure the general public and boost national pride at the same time.

However, the Covid-19 vaccine is also related to matters of transparency, with MPs asking for further information on the matter. This is achieved either through direct questions (Example 10) or by explicitly requesting a shift in communication policies.

- (10) **Will the Minister also explain** the Government's reasons for failing to demand transparency of the conditions attached to public research and development funding, **as well as for licences and agreements related to the Oxford University and AstraZeneca covid vaccine?** (Mishra 2020)

MPs demand general collaboration to provide the public with correct information regarding the vaccine (e.g., *to better inform the public* – 4/4.87ptw), as misinformation seems to be a problem that needs to be limited (e.g., *to help counter misinformation, I hope that the Government will be very careful that disinformation is not going out to the public about the Pfizer vaccine* – 9/10.97ptw). As a matter of fact, social media networks are explicitly addressed as one of the causes of misinformation (e.g., *the social media giants are largely failing proactively to take down the burgeoning levels of misinformation about coronavirus vaccines that is shared and promoted on their platforms*) and are invited to collaborate with the government (e.g., *commit* – 5 cases) to avoid single users to contribute to the spread of disinformation, e.g.:

- (11) I am encouraged by the fact that social media companies who have attended meetings with us have agreed to **commit** to the principle that no user or company should directly profit from covid-19 vaccine disinformation and to ensure a timely response when we flag such content to them. (Hancock 2020)

Misinformation of course leads to vaccine hesitancy, which is also reported in one speech (e.g., *31% of the British public would be hesitant to have a coronavirus vaccine, polling from YouGov shows that so-called anti-vaccination sentiment is on the increase in the UK*) and presented as an increasing problem in the UK.

While most MPs tend to be reassuring on the vaccine issue by using adjectives related to its safety (e.g., *safe, effective, reassuring* – 12 /14.63ptw), some report its failures (*the critical point of, we cannot be sure, the only way to check how well a coronavirus vaccine works* – 7 cases) leading to potential uncertainty on the subject.

Overall, from this brief qualitative analysis, it emerges that the first year of the pandemic is altogether dominated by a positive representation

of the discovery of the vaccine and the implementation of the first campaign and the tension between vaccine support and vaccine hesitancy is only in the background. The political need of positive representation offers an example of public discourse addressing both the emotional needs of the general public (boosting confidence in the vaccine) and the needs of political debate (boosting confidence in the nation).

7. Conclusions

In this paper we have briefly explored diachronic change in discourse regarding vaccines in the British Parliament from 1803 to 2021. The findings reveal a dynamic transformation in the focus and themes of vaccine-related discussions over the centuries.

Results from the first part of analysis show that since the smallpox vaccine, there has been a focus in shift of attention. As a matter of fact, in the first decade of the 19th century the focus was on the vaccine itself and on the process of its creation and development. As vaccination policies expanded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, trust issues have become more pronounced, as shown in the analysis of the first decade of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the credibility of experts remained unchallenged in discussions concerning vaccine benefits and side effects. This is in line with the development of scientific knowledge in the 19th century. Trust in scientific expertise was consolidating and going hand in hand with the development of a professional view of science and scientific research: throughout the century, scientific professionalism became increasingly prominent, reinforcing confidence in the scientific community's authority (e.g., Bondi 2021).

The mid-20th century marked a shift toward a broader examination of vaccines, encompassing not only health policies, public safety, and research, but also economic considerations. The possibilities offered by vaccines are explored within a wider range of scientific tools, but this transformation reflected evolving societal values and priorities.

Approaching the 21st century, a heightened awareness of vaccine consequences began to emerge. The debate centred on scientific investigation and its contribution to the improvement of public health, but economic considerations kept a prominent position too. Particularly with the rise of "no vax" movements, debates also included topics such as misinformation and the role of public discourse in countering it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), our analysis indicated that politicians increasingly employed highly evaluative language alongside

scientific references. Emotional argument was not always separable from scientific argument. This change towards increasing use of positive and evaluative adjectives was likely driven by the urgency of the situation. The diffusion of mistrust and uncertainty also placed emphasis on transparency, while the polarization of the vaccine debate (often associated to social media) might have been a factor influencing the need to support government policy. Promotional discourse was needed to boost confidence in the vaccine and in the country's ability to manage the situation.

In this context, the importance of health communication emerged as a critical element in the debate, as managing information dissemination was perceived as a crucial issue during times of crisis. Politicians were under pressure to handle the dissemination of information regarding the pandemic's consequences and the appropriate actions required in times of crisis (Zhang et al. 2020). Effective health communication turned out to be a cornerstone for information exchange and collaborative efforts (de Las Heras-Pedrosa et al. 2020), underscoring the importance of addressing misinformation and boosting public confidence in vaccination efforts.

The findings of our study are limited to a very specific focus (the word *vaccine*) and a very specific context (British parliamentary debates). The brief overview, however, highlights not only shifts in scientific understanding but also the broader societal and political contexts within which these discussions occur.

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Ageist propaganda on social media: Disguising hate speech through mock politeness

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to analyse how mock politeness strategies signal the expression of ageist propaganda in online news commentary. By resorting to a subset of the NETLANG hate speech corpus, composed of user-generated texts posted on the comment boards of the *Daily Mail* news website, namely in response to articles dealing with sensitive age-related issues, the article looks into the disguised ways in which ageism is voiced. More specifically, it examines four different types of politeness strategies – thanking, complimenting, agreeing, and apologising – and assesses whether their positive and negative face-enhancing function is genuine or, as the hypothesis goes, insincere, hence strategic and manipulative, playing a triggering role in the expression of prejudice. The findings confirm the occurrence of pragmatic mismatch, as anticipated in the literature on mock politeness, and reveal a two-phase process under which it is accomplished. The article thus hopes to shed light on a relatively neglected aspect of im/politeness studies, by describing devious realizations of politeness strategies through both formulaic and creative language. At the same time, it hopes to contribute to understanding the exploitation of polite speech acts for propagandistic, potentially harmful, ideological effects regarding an equally neglected social group in hate speech research.

Keywords: mock politeness, hate speech, speech acts, face, ageism, propaganda, social media, NETLANG corpus.

1. Introduction

Propaganda and hate speech have been considered to be notorious semantic partners. United on a negative connotative basis, the two phenomena share a few crucial traits, such as ideological manipulation and potentially harmful

intent. They also use similar propagation techniques, being published and broadcast with a view to influencing public opinion as widely as possible. The correlation between hate speech and propaganda has been pointed out in social media scholarship: Langton (2012), for instance, believes the former to work “as a kind of” the latter, while Karjo and Ng (2020), similarly, use “hate speech” as a modifier of “propaganda”. The Internet has proved to be an ideal stage for hate speech to flourish, and the elderly have also been unfortunate targets. In this case, ageist propaganda online is not necessarily at the hands of a specific social group, let alone an organised one, i.e. a set of people understood under a certain social variable that carry out a prearranged agenda. Rather, social media ageism seems to cut across various sections of society, regardless of gender, nationality, class or ethnicity – much along the lines of offline ageism for that matter (Butler 1969; Levin – Levin 1980; Palmore 1999). The pervasiveness of ageism on the web is so acute, despite the anti-prejudice regulations established by digital companies, that it begs more academic attention. Actually, it is exactly because moderation policies are in full force that it is interesting to see how haters manage to voice ageism successfully without being deleted or suspended.

In light of these premises, the present article revisits the concept of mock politeness, a relatively neglected issue in im/politeness studies, so as to see whether it may function as an enabling, or triggering, device to express prejudice and discrimination. The main research question guiding this study is whether politeness, instead of being used to protect the hearer’s face, may be used for the exact opposite, i.e. to attack and jeopardise it, thus serving antisocial functions in allowing the speaker to paradoxically voice aggressiveness and hate. By focusing on a set of four conventionalised politeness strategies and interactions, namely thanking, complimenting, agreeing, and apologising, the study deconstructs their occurrence in specific discursive contexts and describes the reverse, impolite, effect they carry in building a disparaging, bigoted, and defamatory picture of a vulnerable social group.

The article is organised as follows. Section 2 briefly reviews the literature on the key notions of hate speech, propaganda, and ageism, trying to highlight their conceptual intersections. The third section puts forth the concept of pragmatic mismatch as a key element to defining “mock politeness”, and it outlines the existing theoretical approaches to the concept by distinguishing between cognate phenomena, like mock impoliteness and deception. Section 4 describes the method and data, which were collected from a corpus of user-generated texts posted on the *Daily Mail* website. The

fifth section offers a pragmatic analysis of a range of comment texts which exemplify ageist prejudice disguised through mock politeness strategies, trying to find out how the speech act mismatch occurs. Finally, section 6 sums up the findings and concludes.

2. Hate speech, propaganda, and ageism

Notwithstanding its pernicious lurking presence all over the online world, hate speech seems to escape a consensual definition, often being mistaken with kindred phenomena, such as aggressive, offensive, insulting, threatening, abusive, and obscene speech (Davidson et al. 2017; Fortuna et al. 2020 – for an overview of the definitional challenge, see Ermida 2023b). Outside academia, where digital companies try to monitor and control the proliferation of hate speech, human rights activists and institutions also keep a watchful eye. The Council of Europe (2022), for instance, defines it as follows: “[...] the term ‘hate speech’ shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance” – “intolerance” covering “discrimination and hostility” against various so-called minorities.¹ The United Nations (2023), likewise, has tried to define hate speech, but by enlarging its target scope beyond CoE’s ethnocentric, nationalist emphasis: in its view, hate speech is any kind of communication that “uses pejorative or discriminatory language” with regard to “a person or a group on the basis of who they are”, and particularise: on the basis of “their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender, or other identity factor”.²

In academic contexts, approaches to hate speech either dismissively take the term for granted, thus falling on the conceptual quagmire trap, or concentrate on just one or two of the concept’s defining features disregarding all others (Brown 2017). The latter stance varies depending on the theoretical standpoint adopted: whether it is a content-based, an intent-based, or an effect-based approach to hate speech (Marwick – Miller 2014). Content-based studies of hate speech concentrate on *what* it says about an individual or a group, adopting a locutionary focus on the lexis of hate speech, e.g. in terms of keyness, frequency, and collocation, especially within NLP research and computational linguistics (e.g. Zampieri et al. 2019): the assumption is

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/committee-of-ministers1>.

² <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech>. Accessed March 2023.

that the presence of certain negative lexical elements (such as slurs, taboo words, and disparaging nouns and adjectives) can be used as a predictive feature for classifying a text as hateful (Schmidt – Wiegand 2017). The second, intent-based perspective has been popular in social sciences and media studies on the one hand, where hate speech is regarded as a mechanism intended to “enact and brutally enforce” antisocial values around the world (e.g. Udupa et al. 2021), and on the other hand in pragmatic scholarship, where illocution-based research has tried to establish the performativity of hate speech and the accountability of the expression of discrimination and prejudice (e.g. Macdonald – Lorenzo-Dus 2020). Finally, effect-based approaches have thrived among political philosophers and ethicists, who are mainly interested in the actual harm, and not just hurt, that expressions of hatred do to “the groups who are denounced or bestialized” (Waldron 2012: 9; see also Cohen-Almagor 2013, Weinstein 2017). Harm-based approaches have also prospered in legal scholarship, concerned as it with the public jeopardising of minority rights in the difficult ongoing process of democratic legitimation (e.g. Benesh 2014; Sellars 2016; Gelber 2017).

The idea of harm also underlies much of the discussion of propaganda, tying in with other features that the two phenomena share, such as their public propagation, their persuasive intent and manipulative effect. Tsesis (2002), for instance, who investigates how harmful social movements feed on hate speech, crucially examines the destructive power of hate propaganda, using the two terms interchangeably. Most academics actually consider hate speech to be *a kind of* propaganda, i.e. a modifier, or a hyponym of the broader, superordinate category (Langton 2012; Oberschall 2012; Karjo – Ng 2020). Many other scholars acknowledge the negative connotation of the term propaganda: Hobbs (2020), for example, mentions the bad reputation the word enjoys, pointing out its association with totalitarian regimes from the past, with lies and misinformation, and with unethical efforts by interest groups to sway public opinion and crush criticism. Besides, she remarks, even though present-day propaganda can also voice harmless agendas by the entertainment industry, the business sector, health and social organisations, education, culture, and religion, many digital forms of contemporary propaganda thrive on conflict and cultivate us-versus-them narratives that dehumanise the other and desensitise the masses into hatred and segregation, much like hate speech.

One of the target groups of hate speech, or hateful propaganda, is the elderly. The social variable of age, along with gender, ethnicity, and social class, among others, is believed to be a factor of bias and stereotyping in

interpersonal, institutional and public discourse (on a synopsis, see Ermida 2009). Coined by Robert N. Butler (1969: 243), the term “ageism” designates “a deep-seated uneasiness on the part of the young and middle-aged – a personal revulsion to and distaste for growing older”. The word applies to three conceptual areas, namely prejudicial attitudes, often by the elderly themselves, discriminatory practices, especially in institutional settings such as employment and health care, and stereotypic beliefs against the aged, which undermine their personal dignity (Butler 1980). A mirror concept of ageism is “gerontophobia” (Levin – Levin 1980), which denotes an obsessed fear of the elderly, of one’s own ageing, and of association with death, also implying a tendency to blame the (aged) victim.

In so-called gerontological linguistics, the “deficit paradigm” has been observed in a legion of communicative contexts, where senior adults are represented and addressed from the standpoint of presupposed impairment and decline (e.g. Coupland – Coupland 2013). Indeed, an ageist bias has been detected in a range of miscellaneous language settings, from doctor/patient dialogues (Thompson et al. 2004) and institutional discourse in nursing homes (Grainger 2004) to TV fictional characterisation (Robinson et al. 2004) and politics (Witrogen 2020). A curious neologism has recently been coined to report on discrimination against the aged and the process of ageing, namely the blend “discriminating” (Grego – Vicentini 2022).

3. Mock politeness as pragmatic mismatch

The term “mock politeness” is credited to Leech (1983), who was the first to suggest two forms of exploiting politeness in a mocking way: the first relates to causing offence in an indirect way, by means of irony; the second relates to strengthening solidarity in an equally indirect way, by means of banter. According to him, “[w]hile irony is an apparently friendly way of being offensive (mock politeness)”, banter “is an offensive way of being friendly (mock impoliteness)” (Leech 1983: 144). In both cases, there is an obvious mismatch between what is said and what is intended.

Culpeper (1996) rescues the concept of mock politeness in his early framework of five impoliteness categories. Based on Brown and Levinson’s 1987 politeness model, he views “mock politeness” as a category in which “the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations” (Culpeper 1996: 357). The label reappears in his 2003 joint paper, where, yet again, mock

politeness is seen as an impoliteness device aiming at “social disharmony” (Culpeper et al. 2003: 1555). The term is overshadowed by that of “mock *impoliteness*” in his later 2011 book, where he offers a reshuffled model of “implicational impoliteness”. Yet, mock politeness can be argued to be implicit in his discussion of “mixed messages” (including sarcasm, teasing and some labels for humour), which “mix features which point towards a polite interpretation and features that point towards an impolite interpretation” (Culpeper 2011: 165). The notion of “convention-driven” categories that clash and create implicational impoliteness can also be said to involve mock politeness. In such categories, both internal and external, the concept of “mismatch” regains prominence: internally, i.e. in the text, the mismatch takes place between two discrepant linguistic behaviours; externally, the mismatch occurs between the linguistic behaviour and the context. Importantly, Culpeper (2016: 429) later on salvages the literal term “mock politeness” and calls it an “impoliteness meta-strategy”.

Taylor (2011, 2015, 2016), in her substantial work on mock politeness, labels mock politeness mismatched forms as “co-textual” (Culpeper’s 2011 “internal”) and “contextual” (Culpeper’s 2011 “external”). Co-textual mismatch covers several different structures, for instance a blend of a polite grammatical structure with a vulgar word (e.g. “Could you just f*ck off?” [Taylor 2015: 130]), or what she calls a garden-path structure, where the speaker moves from apparent politeness to impoliteness (Taylor 2015: 138) by renegotiating initial interpretations. Contextual mismatch, on the other hand, involves a discrepancy between the utterance and the discursive situation. The centrality of the notion of mismatch for Taylor is patent in her definition of mock politeness as occurring “when there is an im/politeness mismatch leading to an implicature of impoliteness” (2015: 130). Taylor (2011: 226) significantly states that mock politeness “involves an absolute inversion of effect: far from functioning to mitigate the FTA, the politeness forms constitute the FTA”. She goes on to assert that the effects of mock politeness – which she also calls “surface politeness” – derive from “a reversal of face evaluation: from respect for face to attack on face” (Taylor 2011: 227). This clash, she ventures, results in a greater face loss than might have been achieved by a blunt, unambiguous on-record FTA, owing to the previous, misleading, gain.

Haugh (2014: 278) defines a mock politeness implicature as carrying “an ostensibly ‘polite’ stance, which [...] masks or disguises an ‘impolite’ stance”. The idea of masking or disguising a certain illocutionary force relies on the notion of indirectness, a crucial one to conceptualising mock politeness, as well as mock impoliteness, on which Haugh’s book mainly

focuses. Indirectness, as Haugh (2014: 21) aptly remarks, is also a cornerstone of most discussions of pragmatic mismatch, from Grice's distinction between what is said and what is intended, to Searle's dichotomy of direct and indirect speech acts, and Sperber and Wilson's "explicature vs. implicature" dyad. In the case of mock politeness, indirectness seems to lie in the roundabout way to being impolite: instead of expressing the impolite content straight away, the speakers opt for an insincerely polite introductory utterance which only then gives way to a direct FTA.

Other authors who have tackled mock politeness usually concentrate on its indirect and/or antithetical nature. Bousfield (2008), for instance, views it as a form of "off-record" impoliteness (or "indirect", in Brown and Levinson's terms), which "appears on the surface to positively constitute, maintain or enhance the face of the intended recipient(s) but actually threatens, attacks and/or damages the face of the recipient(s)" (2008: 138), whereas Marlangeon and Alba-Juez (2012: 82) regard it as "formally polite acts with an impolite purpose". Yin and Zhou (2019) conceive the antithetical nature of mock politeness as a contrast between what they call a "superficially polite speech act" and an attack on the hearer's face or "sociality rights" (which include so-called equity rights and association rights).

Other recent studies on mock politeness have tended to concentrate on its sarcastic and ironic character. Beeching (2019), for instance, regards mock politeness as a sarcastic or ironic usage of conventionalised politeness strategies, and mock apologies, in particular, as pretence strategies that fail to undergo what she refers to as Ducrot's 'performative illusion'. She adds that such mock polite usages are typically indirect and dependent on implicature, and that they rely on a "mismatch" (again) between the politeness strategy and the context in which it appears. In other words, the lexical semantics says one thing, but the pragmatic illocutionary force says another, thus "creating a potentially highly impolite interpretation" (Beeching 2019: 291). Ghezzi and Molinelli (2019: 245) also view mock politeness strategies as ironic or sarcastic speech acts, and they find that in Italian the "scusa" apology and variants "do not position the speaker as being regretful, but reinforce dissent, challenge or sarcasm". In such contexts, they hold, these mock forms are used to actually foster impoliteness.

A terminological detail should be added to this brief overview of mock politeness scholarship, concerning the very adjective in the phrase: "mock" qualifies something that is not authentic or real. As Haugh and Bousfield (2012: 1102) point out, the dictionary meaning of the term "mock" is that of "having the character of imitation" or of "being 'simulated' or 'feigned'", and

they add: “when it is used to refer to an attitude it indicates that the attitude is ‘not based on real feelings’”. But the imitation or simulation underpinning mock politeness does not aim to deceive: instead, it intends to be successfully identified as such, so as to reap the desired face-attack effects. As Taylor (2016: 15-16) aptly remarks, mock politeness differs from deceit in the presence of an “honest [sincere] metmessage”, which is communicated in an “obvious” way: the “overtness of the mismatch” is meant to guide the participants to “knowingly shift to another mode of interaction which is patterned onto the primary framework”, a shift which characteristically occurs within the same interaction (unlike deception, where the mismatch may be perceived much later on).

This is exactly the case with the four types of mock politeness strategies discussed in this article, which are grouped under four categories of speech acts: thanking, complimenting, agreeing, and apologising. In Austin’s original taxonomy (1962: 89), these are regarded as “behabitives” – “a kind of performative concerned roughly with reactions to behaviour by others and towards others, and designed to exhibit attitudes and feelings” – a category which Searle (1976: 13) later renamed as “expressives”, the illocutionary point of which is to “express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content”. Each of the four types of expressives discussed in the textual analysis subsections of this article is taken to illustrate what at surface level is a typically polite speech act, aiming at apparently redressing the hearer’s positive and/or negative face, only to produce a reverse effect. In other words, the psychological state expressed by the speaker (e.g. gratitude, sorrow, etc.) proves to be insincere, as it does not correspond to the propositional content of the rest of the comment. The sincerity condition for illocutionary acts (Searle 1976) is thus broken – but the resulting infelicitous speech act is strategic, aiming at conveying hateful content indirectly.

4. Method and data

The analysis offered next is a qualitative approach to mock politeness occurrences that are contextually embedded, and as such require manual identification. Only through a careful reading of the co-text, be it intra-comment or inter-comment (within the speaker’s utterance or across a dialogue sequence), could the mocking intent be spotted. An automatic keyword search proved insufficient, producing a great number of false positives, that is, of occurrences of polite formulae, such as *thanks* and

sorry, that happen to be genuine expressions of, respectively, gratitude and regret. In such cases, the routine keywords implying politeness had to be interpreted both within the comment and across the conversation sequence. The reverse also occurred: some polite keywords were true positives, that is, they proved to be actual cases of mock politeness. Yet, a keyword search proved useless to spot non-conventional expressions of mock politeness, whose linguistic originality makes them escape the formulaic straightjacket that more easily falls prey to automatic detection. In other words, verbal creativity is a clever way to elude hate speech identification algorithms.

A second methodological proviso is that the type of mock politeness strategies covered is not restricted to negative politeness, as in Taylor (2011). Conversely, the present article looks at both positive and negative politeness strategies, which are “mocked” so as to achieve a reverse, face-threatening effect. Besides, and also unlike Taylor (2011), the analysis is not restricted to first-order occurrences of mock politeness, i.e. situations where the hearers, or the speakers themselves, acknowledge its occurrence, even though a few such cases do come up. Rather, it proposes a second-order analysis where the language used suggests, or indicates, the presence of a mock politeness strategy, even if the interlocutors fail to recognise it, or refrain from doing so. The first-order scenario is not only much less productive, but also less likely to provide a view of the actual variety of pragmatic strategies of mock politeness used in online exchanges, which beg for examination.

The data were collected from NETLANG, a bilingual hate speech corpus constructed under the auspices of a four-year research project (on a description of the compilation and pre-processing phases of the corpus, see Ermida 2023a). The subset that emerged from the selection is composed of extensive comment threads published on the *Daily Mail* website, in response to news articles dealing with sensitive issues regarding old age, such as health care, retirement pensions and subsidies. It should be recalled that the *Daily Mail* is a widely read British tabloid newspaper with a right-wing slant and a lurid reporting style, which may inherently steer readers towards bias, by conveying prejudicial perceptions of events and actors and by attracting discriminatory responses. The extraction covers a period ranging from 2019 to 2022, and the number of comments under analysis totals 3219.

In short, the method of analysis adopted in this study is a combination of corpus tools with a manual approach. First, a keyword search was undertaken with the help of the program devised by the project team: this was done by choosing the items “language” [English], “age” [Over 65s], and platform [*Daily Mail*]. An automatic search of politeness formulae followed,

by using the localizing function on the resulting PDF documents. Finally, a more laborious, time-consuming analysis was carried out, which involved raking the documents manually, so as to spot non-routine expressions of surface politeness in the expression of ageism.

5. Textual analysis

Before turning to the discussion of four mock politeness strategies present in the dataset under scrutiny – which are, or give way to, implicit expressions of ageism – it is important to remark that the corpus also contains quite a few occurrences of explicit ageism. Actually, the dataset does exhibit many direct, on-record formulations of ageist prejudice, as the next two passages, of all that could be summoned, show:

- (1) Pensioners have some front claiming the genuine sick and disabled deserve no help but only pensioners should receive extra help and money.. THIS IS THE CURRENT GENERATION OF PENSIONERS we the young ha.te. The sick and disabled are 10 of you, your anytime d.eath couldn't come quick enou gh, sata.nists.
- (2) As if that much age confers anything besides frailty, faulty judgement and waste of resources. Past retirement age, people just become parasites. Those two should be thrown in a mincer and sold as dog-food. At least then they'd be useful for a change.

The first of these comments is particularly rich in that the commenter explicitly phrases the word “hate” (misspelled as “ha.te” so as to dodge detection algorithms) while establishing a divide between old and young (see e.g. van Dijk 2015). Besides, it generalises prejudiced accusations and presents faulty presuppositions (the adjective “genuine”, which qualifies the other “sick and disabled”, carries the idea that they, the pensioners, are *not* genuine in their health complaints), at the same time as it phrases blatant ill wishes and direct affronts.

Similarly, but perhaps more graphically, comment (2) expresses extreme ageist abuse: after the claim that the old are “nothing but” people with physical and mental deficiencies who are a drain on the public purse (another generalisation, devoid of evidence), the commenter moves on to obnoxious insult (“just parasites”) and to an actual incitement to physical violence. The closing remark, that serving to feed dogs is the only use people

past retirement age have, is the epitome of contempt, reducing an entire social group to sheer worthlessness.

In terms of im/politeness theory, the two comments show utter disrespect for the hearer's face (Goffman 1967), be it positive or negative. As Brown and Levinson (1987) hold, the victims' basic claim to, respectively, an appreciated public self-image on the one hand, and to freedom of action and freedom from imposition on the other is viciously attacked. Indeed, the explicitly discriminatory portrayal of the elderly destroys their positive face, whereas the cruel suggestions of how they should act and how people should act towards them destroys their negative face.

Unlike the cases above, the examples discussed in the next four subsections illustrate indirect forms of expressing hate. Rather than being on-record formulations of face-attack, the following discursive situations are framed as apparently – or initially – polite, while carrying an underlying hateful content that becomes manifest only afterwards.

5.1 Mock thanks

Current speech act accounts have placed thanks within an “attitudinal” category of illocutions which relate to the speaker's reaction to the hearer's behaviour (House – Kádár 2021), i.e. the speaker's attitude towards, and judgement/evaluation of, the interlocutor's action. As such, they typically project onto the past, since their propositional content regards an action or an event, attributable to the hearer, that has previously taken place. Besides, and importantly, this action or event has to be something that the speakers perceive to be positive or beneficial for them, hence deserving their appreciation.

The “speaker-benefit” felicity condition is clearly absent from the following reply, which a commenter gives during a heated discussion about the British NHS. The propositional content of the rest of the utterance, which claims the elderly's ill health is their fault, indicates that the speaker has nothing to thank the interlocutor for:

- (3) *Many thanks* for the uncalled-for health update. So how much should the tax payer spend on keeping you alive? New hearts for 90 year olds? New lungs for those who have smoked? Let's face it many of the old folk used to eat beef dripping on toast and then wonder why their arteries are shot [*Italics mine, henceforth*]

Thanking is one of a variety of speech acts that tend to be realised with routine formulae (Coulmas 1981), which encompass not only the literal

rendering of the verb in a range of forms (*thank you, thanks, thanks a lot, thanks a bunch*) but also an array of more verbose phrasings, such as *I'm so grateful, I appreciate it, I couldn't have done it without you, I owe you one, Much obliged*. Various authors have employed the concept of "politeness markers" to describe the correlation between certain formulae and the speech acts that, by default, they indicate. Yet, this relationship has proved to be fuzzier than expected, and routine expressions have often been found not to coincide with their established illocutionary category (see e.g. Eelen 2001; Haugh 2003; Watts 2003). This means that certain politeness markers, such as the quintessential "thank you", may serve illocutionary forces other than expressing a psychological state of gratitude. In other words, the sincerity condition is violated, producing an infelicitous speech act.

As in (3) above, the occurrence of thanking formulae with non-gratitude-based illocutions in (4) below seems to mock politeness conventions:

- (4) *Thx a lot* old geezers, you will consume every last resource of this country and leave nothing behind, and couldn't care less.

The use of the politeness marker "Thx a lot" (i.e. "thanks a lot") is not in agreement with the propositional content of the whole of the second-person singular construction that follows it, a sentence that attributes not only actions but intentions to a group sneeringly identified as "old geezers". The serious double accusation of excessive expenditure and utter recklessness that is addressed to the elderly is in stark contrast with the expression of thanks that opens the utterance. In other words, thanking is in this case an ironic marker that means exactly the opposite of what it says, thus creating a clear pragmatic mismatch – hence, it is a strong contender to the category of mock politeness. Along similar lines, another significant comment, which occurs on a thread about free bus passes for seniors, reads:

- (5) Wait we should *thank* the Greedy baby boomers who got free education
Who could buy houses at a reasonable price
And who messed up the country for the rest of us *Cheers*

Again, the speech act of thanking is literally phrased at the outset of the comment, with the help of a modal verb ("should") that gives apparent moral legitimacy to the statement that follows. This statement, however, contains no positive propositional content whatsoever, hence, nothing to thank the targets for: instead, it expresses another litany of accusations, this time regarding purported privileges of the elderly, slurred as "greedy", as

well as macro-economic failings to be blamed on them. The mock expression of thanks is reiterated with “cheers” at the end of the utterance.

These examples illustrate blunt face-attacks against all senior addressees. The bold generalisations on which they are built group all members of a fairly large group under the same demeaning, defamatory portrayal, shattering their public image (i.e. their positive face) – which misleadingly the expression of thanks seemed at first to redress.

5.2 Mock compliments

Paying compliments is another typical politeness strategy to strengthen the hearer’s positive face. By praising a characteristic of the hearer’s, a possession, a deed, or an event that is somewhat related to them, the speaker fosters the hearer’s desire that their self-image be appreciated and approved of. In light of Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 104) framework, compliments, like other positive politeness strategies, may “exaggerate S’s interest in, approval of, and sympathy with H”, also functioning as a kind of “gift” to be given to the hearer as a sign of respect and deference.

Scholarship on the speech act of complimenting has highlighted their sociologically conditioned nature, for instance in terms of gender (Briallen 2008), and their culture specific realisations. Jucker (2009), for instance, aptly points out that the appropriateness of compliments depends on the communicative situation and the language community where the compliment is paid. And responding to compliments may also be a cultural trap (on a taxonomy of compliment responses, see e.g. Herbert 1990): accepting it may give an impression of immodesty; rejecting it may transmit the idea that the recipient disagrees with, hence does not respect or look up to, the complimenter.

In the present dataset, the conjunction of compliments with sharp criticisms and accusations happens next:

- (6) *Many elders have depth and character after what they’ve experienced and are a joy to be around. But some things they do are devastating to everyone else I.e. brexit which the young will continue to pay a hefty price for decades. Using the NHS for attention seeking on a scale that cripples it.*

[Reply:] Thank you for such a patronising comment

The first sentence in comment (5), phrased in a non-conventional, creative way, attributes a string of desirable features to elders. Yet, the next sentence quickly switches to conveying, again, stereotypes against seniors through

abusive generalisations. In other words, there is an obvious mismatch, signalled by the conjunction “but”, between the complimentary content of the first part of the comment and the accusatory content of the second, as if the compliment were meant to catch the targets off-guard and make them lose face more drastically afterwards (cf. Taylor 2016). Curiously, the comment given in reply (“Thank you for such a patronising comment”) is, in itself, a case of mock thanks, with a very interesting occurrence of meta-language, i.e. the use of a first-order evaluative comment to classify the previous utterance.

The following comment, meanwhile, is a clear case of mock politeness in that the compliment is ironical: what looks like a surface form of praise, regarding the admiration that the so-called baby boomers deserve from the generations down the line (again, a non-formulaic compliment), turns out to be contradicted by the rest of the utterance, which violently attacks this age cohort for purportedly supporting Brexit:

- (7) Hey B00mers, *your children and grandchildren will remember you fondly when you're gone..* You've been handed everything on a gold platter since birth and then ruined it for the rest of us by leaving the EU. Will go down as the most selfish generation in history.

The next comment, more drastically still, consists of one single ironical statement, a statement whose mismatch occurs halfway – from deserving an honorary prize to being described in very demeaning terms, senior adults seem to be the butt of an aggressive joke:

- (8) You old codgers *desrve a medal each* for draining our economy with your entitlement, constant whining, your sticky hands grabbing freebies while the rest of us are working hard to pay for it all

Once again, ageism is rendered in an initially disguised form, only to give way to violent, prejudiced diatribes against the elderly enjoying social benefits.

5.3 Mock agreement

The importance of agreement to politeness goes back to the early approaches. Leech (1983: 138) clearly establishes a “Maxim of Agreement” in his discussion of maxims of politeness, and frames it within a “tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement

by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc.". Likewise, Brown and Levinson (1987) place the strategies of "Seeking agreement" and "Avoiding disagreement" under their list of positive politeness strategies. Clearly, pretending to be in consonance with an opinion or judgment expressed by the hearer is likely to shield their positive face, i.e. build their impression that the opinions they expressed are valuable, competent and knowledgeable – hence, that they are liked and admired. Later research into disagreement has highlighted its impoliteness potential (on an overview, see Ermida 2017). Angouri and Locher (2012: 1549), however, remark that it is the ways in which disagreement is expressed, rather than its occurrence per se, that will have an impact on relational issues, and determine whether it is felt as face-aggravating, face-maintaining, or face-enhancing. Walkinshaw (2015) also points out that disagreements can be regarded as supportive, for instance when disagreeing with a negative self-assessment.

In the present dataset, the strategic use of agreement seems, at first sight, to signal a concurring attitude, a friendly position of support – but, on closer analysis, the semantic import of the whole utterance switches to the opposite:

- (9) *Yay, free travel!* A lot of old people can't wipe their own bottom anymore but whatever.

The exclamatory token "yay" opens the comment, explicitly indicating (excited) agreement with seniors enjoying the free bus pass policy. However, the sentence that follows completely inverts the truthfulness of such an attitude, and instead phrases the faulty argument that the elders are too crippled to enjoy it – a typical ageist stereotype. The sincerity condition for agreements is obviously at odds with the propositional content of the second part of the comment, creating a serious speech act mismatch, and a drastic shift from surface politeness to flagrant impoliteness.

Similarly, the following comment makes a supportive claim about the same issue via the agreement formula "right". However, the fact that the assertion is obviously ironical, i.e. false, makes the utterance a case of mock agreement, which can also be read as conveying a ridiculing intention:

- (10) *Right,* free bus passes are important for the economy.

The next comment, made in the same discussion thread, is yet another way to express surface agreement with the government's free bus pass measure, by resorting to the agreement marker "definitely". It is purportedly authored

by a 59-year-old, who ironically claims to be looking forward to enjoying it upon turning sixty. Yet, the last part of his utterance, after the adversative conjunction “but”, cancels the concurring attitude by humorously mentioning death, which creates a sudden semantic clash. Of course, the underlying ageist connotation is that a person as young as 60 is already close to the grave:

- (11) I recently moved up to Scotland and turned 59 last week and *definitely* am quite looking forward to having a free bus pass next year, but I’m looking forward to death even more.

An interesting case occurs in the next passage. The commenter starts by using the agreement formula “ok”, followed by an anti-ageism assertion. But what comes next – a series of remarks about older people “dithering” and wasting other people’s time – completely invalidates the opening claim, and proves it to be insincere, hence infelicitous:

- (12) *OK ageism sucks*. Mind you, I’m only 58 but I do make a conscious effort not to dither like so many others my age plus do. You know the ones, always blocking the aisles on planes as they retrieve their jaffacakes or just standing and waiting until all the shopping is through the till before even imagining that they might actually need money.

Ridicule is a rather productive strategy in the mock agreement category. The following comments are another two cases of cancelling a previous agreement (that ageist discrimination does exist) by invoking ageist stereotypes, regarding both physical decline, namely deafness, and intellectual decline, namely memory loss:

- (13) *I’m sure* 95 year olds are discriminated against but then they probably can’t even hear you so it doesn’t really matter.
- (14) *Absolutely*, seniors should file a complaint against every ageist attack, but as they’ve forgotten their name they can’t do it can they

A good example of humour mixed with mock agreement takes place next. A previous comment on the “invisibility” of older people, who complain about being ignored in public places, meets with an agreement token, “True”. Yet, the adversative clause cancels the implied solidarity effect by triggering a humorous clash – between a sad, regrettable situation, that

older people passively fall victim to, and a voluntary, deliberate criminal activity, shoplifting:

(15) The older you get, the more invisible you become!

[Reply:] *True*, but doesn't work when you are shoplifting.

5.4 Mock apologies

Apologising, perhaps the quintessential politeness strategy and the most widespread cross-culturally, aims to redress the hearer's negative face, unlike the three previous categories. Brown and Levinson define negative face as the want of every hearer to have their "freedom of action unhindered" and their "attention unimpeded" (1987: 129), which covers their "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction" (1987: 61). In apologising, the speaker admits wrongdoing regarding a past action which is not beneficial to the hearer and is of their responsibility (thus threatening their own positive face), even though the action may also be imminent, as in the routine formula "Sorry to bother you, but... (e.g. can you tell me time?)". The awareness that the speaker's action intrudes upon the hearer's space and causes inconvenience and/or harm lies at the basis of the sincerity condition for apologies, which implies a certain degree of sorrow or remorse (Austin 1962: 79 calls it "repentance") and turns them into a request for forgiveness.

The variety of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) for apologies shows that, just like thanking and agreeing, apologising has a range of "formulaic, routinized expressions in which the speaker's apology is made explicit" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 290): e.g. *sorry, excuse me, I apologise, forgive me, pardon me, I regret that, I'm afraid*. As Jucker and Taavitsainen (2008: 241) remark, these lexicalised expressions of responsibility and regret are either speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented: in the former case, they focus on the expression of the speaker's feelings (*I'm sorry, I regret, I'm afraid*), whereas in the latter they are "requests to the addressee to change his or her attitude, to show generosity and to forgive the offence perpetrated by the speaker", usually expressed through directives (*excuse me, forgive me, pardon me*).

The study of insincere apologies has pointed out the exploitation of such speech acts for personal gain. Kampf (2009), for instance, elaborates on what he calls public non-apologies as a means for image restoration. Other approaches have focused on signals to identify insincere apologies: Murphy (2014: 199), who examines apologies in the discourse of politicians, regards as less prototypical (i.e. more marginal members of the category)

those apologies made when the attitude of the speaker towards the offense is dismissive or trivialising. Crucially, Beeching (2019) investigates ironic uses of apologetic IFIDs, and argues that they are non-denotative and rely, rather, on a pragmatic mismatch used to perform mock politeness – exactly the line of analysis adopted in this article.

Even though the rather formal apologetic performative verb (“I apologise”) is, not surprisingly, absent from our typically colloquial dataset, “sorry”, the classic expression of regret, is often used as a mock politeness strategy, as seen next:

- (16) *Sorry, truth hurts, boomers ripped off the future generations. They don't deserve any perks or discounts and should be made to pay for their self indulgence.*
- (17) *So sorry, wrinklies, but you had the best of everything. Cheap houses, which meant lots could afford 2nd homes, good wages, stay at home house wife's and free stuff when retired. Wish they'd just all clear off to the marigold hotel*

The most striking feature of these two comments is that the expression of regret is in glaring mismatch with the violent accusations performed afterwards. Usually, apologies contain a future-oriented strategy which Olshtain and Cohen (1983) call “promise of forbearance”: the apologetic speaker, in admitting regret, commits to not incurring in the same wrongdoing again. However, what happens in (16) and (17) above is that, after expressing regret, the speaker goes on to phrase a range of rather offensive, indeed hateful (i.e. prejudiced and discriminatory), remarks about seniors (who are mentioned in the 3rd person in the former case, but directly addressed in the latter). Of course, anticipatory apologies do occur in genuinely polite exchanges, where they are, as Jacobson (2004: 198) suggests, “disarming or softening”. Here, however, they seem to be a mere surface politeness ritual, which completely violates the sincerity condition for apologies, showing the speaker to have a manifestly contemptuous attitude towards the offense s/he is about to perpetrate.

The combination of an apologetic formula with the adversative conjunction “but” happens again in (18), where “Excuse me” is followed by a very toxic appraisal of “brexiteers”, many of whom are usually, even if wrongly, taken to be senior citizens, plus a direct insult:

- (18) *Excuse me, but every over 60 that voted for brexit should have their taxes tripled for destroying our country. Shameful traitors.*

Actually, the statement that over-sixties having voted for Brexit should be financially punished, for which the speaker gives an initial surface apology, resembles one of the possible offences that Deutschmann (2003: 64) lists as underlying the expression of true apologies, namely retaliation. Indeed, the last of his nine offences reads “Offences involving breach of consensus”, and he exemplifies them by referring to disagreeing, contradicting, reprimanding, denying, and retaliating, among others. But the point is that in (18) there is a mismatch between the seriousness of the punishment proposed, and especially of the slander that follows it, and the light-heartedness of the opening apology. Again, it is as if the mock polite speech act served as an enabler of hate speech, as an introductory, triggering exculpation device, after which everything becomes admissible.

Redundancy in the workplace, a cause of great concern for older workers in the comment boards under focus, is the motto of the following thread. The ageing participant shares his anxiety regarding job hunting after being let go, but instead of receiving solidarity and support, gets to be derisively reprimanded – but not without a previous patronising apology:

- (19) Try looking for work at 60, I’ve got 6 years till I’m an OAP I need to work nobody gets back to you on your job application, was told we are not giving you the job as you’ll be at the Doctors and Hospital all the time. just want a van driving job.

[Reply:] *feel sorry for you*, but should have studied a little harder!

The following two comments again focus on the sensitive issue of access to health care. In (20) the commenter resorts to the “I mean no offence” formula, which typically signals the imminent expression of an offence, and the speaker’s awareness of it, whereas in (21), the insincere expression of regret is phrased by means of the explicit performative verb:

- (20) *I mean no offence* to those who are genuine but if the Govt could control all these elderly blocking hospitals for the smallest ailment, preventing younger people from having access to treatment, some old folks just go there to socialise Perhaps we do need a nanny state...to whip people into shape.

- (21) *I regret to inform you* that my doctor’s surgery is packed out with elderly people sucking up all the resources. They have outlived their life expectancy and are on borrowed time at huge expense to the working people of this nation.

In both cases above, the typical pragmatic mismatch between the performance of a conventionalised speech act and the propositional content that ensues is obvious. In fact, the apologetic preface proves entirely empty, as it precedes a series of ageist invectives with no moral qualms whatsoever, ranging from ungrounded accusations to death wishes and fantasist images of physical punishment, where old people are whipped into proper behaviour. Thus the ideological construction of a powerless age cohort, that supposedly deserve their rights to be cut short, is freely broadcast.

The last example of mock politeness in this textual analysis section is an interesting case of reported ageism. Comment (22) is a short narrative by an elderly woman who reproduces, via direct speech, the exact words her doctor told her, which, yet again, are initiated by an insincere apology marker. The commenter's closing assessment of the verbal exchange proves to be a very lucid understanding of two key issues at stake in ageist behaviour: depriving the elderly of their social status by downgrading the address forms (using Christian names instead of last names with titles) and depriving them of their intellectual status by treating them like children or idiots. The passage is also a very interesting case of first-order, metalinguistic evaluation, where impoliteness, and by extension disrespect for the elderly (i.e. ageism), are explicitly spotted:

- (22) I am 71 and retired from the NHS. A young female GP rang me to tell me that my cholesterol was raised at 6.0. I told her that I would lower it with diet rather than take a statin, and she replied "*I'm sorry I can't make you any younger or less post-menopausal*" (using my christian name throughout the conversation). I couldn't understand her logic nor the reason for the ageism and it is not the first time a GP has treated me like an idiot.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to explore online conversations where ageist hate speech – regarded as a type of propaganda – is conveyed in indirect, disguised ways. In order to do so, it focused on a social media subset of news commentary, collected from the NETLANG corpus, where participants discuss sensitive age-related topics, such as health care, retirement pensions, freebies, and also ageism. Even though direct, bald-on-record expressions of ageist prejudice were often found in the dataset, the analysis concentrated only on indirect renderings of age-based hate speech. The hypothesis was that online

commenters resort to mock politeness strategies – i.e. apparently friendly, supportive and respectful phrasings – in order to mask their discriminatory illocutionary intent.

The qualitative analysis undertaken has confirmed the pervasive occurrence of mock politeness strategies to express ageist propaganda. As a preliminary finding, such strategies were found to redress both positive face (in the case of thanks, compliments and expressions of agreement) and negative face (in the case of apologies), while covering a great diversity of linguistic realisations. Indeed, the comments illustrate a range of linguistic phrasings of politeness strategies, from routine formulae to less conventionalised expressions of politeness. While the former lend themselves to a keyword search in a corpus-based approach, the latter have proved much more difficult to spot. Overall, three of the four speech acts under focus (namely, thanking, agreeing and apologising) were often found to be routinely realised through lexicalised expressions. Complimenting, however, proved more averse to ready-made formulas, being conveyed through more creative linguistic choices, and thus requiring a more arduous manual search.

By looking at the discursive surroundings of the polite speech acts, contextually embedded events as they are, the analysis proceeded to examine the intra- and inter-comment co-texts. The findings confirm that all four categories of politeness strategies are framed as apparently – or initially – polite, while carrying an underlying hateful content that becomes manifest afterwards. This process of “speech act mismatch” is realised as follows. In all the cases examined, the mismatch proves to be “internal” (cf. Culpeper 2011) or “co-textual” (cf. Taylor 2015), occurring between two discrepant linguistic behaviours, in a garden-path structure. Yet, unlike previous accounts of mock politeness, the present study has revealed that the mismatch is two-fold and two-phased. First, it occurs within the mock polite illocutionary act, be it thanking, complimenting, agreeing, or apologising, whose infelicity lies in the non-observance of the sincerity condition: in other words, they do not count as expressions of the corresponding psychological states, namely gratitude, admiration, concord, and regret. Secondly, the mismatch occurs between this initial mock speech act and a second, discrepant, speech act, which tends to be a mixture of different illocutionary forces, such as accusation, criticism and complaint: the propositional content of the second part of the comment is strongly at odds with the surface politeness of the first part, and indicates blatant disrespect and contempt for the target.

All in all, the concept of mock politeness has shown to be a productive category in analysing the expression of (ageist) hate speech in indirect,

masked, or disguised ways. The deployment of surface politeness strategies that are infelicitous *qua* insincere is used to introduce, signal, and enable the expression of hateful prejudice against the elderly. What is more, the falsely apparent redressive function such strategies serve not only gives way to, but actually aggravates, the face-attack potential by producing ridicule and a patronising effect.

Crucially, the results of this study have confirmed the consistent existence of ageism in online discourse and signal the importance of future studies. By addressing the problem of prejudice against the elderly on social media, academic scholarship may help raise social awareness about a frequently neglected age cohort. In particular, the description of the linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies of ageist hate speech may contribute to a more fine-tuned detection of its disguised occurrences. Hopefully, it may also impact policy-making and organised action with a view to protecting senior adults on- and off-line.

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