Lynne Magnusson. *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 221.

Lynne Magnusson's excellent new book presents an unusually apt and original interweaving of cultural studies and close reading. (*Caveat emptor*: I served as a referee for this project in 1991, when it was only a plan.) The author's starting point, familiar from Bakhtin and Bourdieu, is that language is inherently interactionist and dialogic: focus properly falls on exchanges more than speeches, and on the social — what flows between interlocutors — more than the psychological — what arises from within the individual. Typical exchanges fall into sets here called social speech genres or collective repertoires, adapted to perform various kinds of incremental repair work that together accomplish the production, reproduction, and maintenance of the quotidian, as well as its adaptation to the needs and desires of its inhabitants. There is room here for both eulogy and dyslogy of the received social order, along with considerable social creativity, as tools developed in one kind of situation get modified by adaptation to others.

Magnusson works with three kinds of texts: Shakespearean dramatic dialogue, early modern English business letters, and the letter-writing manuals that sought to codify as commodities the strategic logic exemplified in the first two. Erasmus's *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522), the earliest manual and the most influential, aimed to model above all the epistolary maintenance of friendship between equals (most often seen as exchanges between learned men). Angel Day's *The English Secretary* (1586, 1592) offers detailed models for letters serving and seeking ambition, performance, and social advancement in a hierarchical context. William Fulwood's *The Enemie of Idleness* (1568) and John Browne's *The Marchants Avizo* (1590) adapt, in surprising ways, many of the other manuals' techniques to the scene of mercantile discourse.

The conjuncture of early modern and modern discourse analysis, letter-writing, and dramatic dialogue goes forward here principally by means of a theory developed by cultural anthropologists Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson in *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). They propose that the activity of politeness is fundamentally reparative, meant to minimize "face-risk," the instability of what Erving Goffman called "face," one's publicly projected and sustained self-image (p. 20). They propose a fundamental division of these mechanisms into those concerned with *positive* face ("the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' [crucially including the desire for its social acceptance and support]") and *negative* face ("freedom of action and freedom from imposition") (*ibid.*). The threats one may fear from or impose on another, which arouse the use of the repair strategies, take their weight from shifting interactions among social Distance (between speaker and hearer), relative social Power (of speaker and hearer), and Ranking (the culture-specific ranking of different kinds of impositions).

Together these concepts propose a rhetoric for performing and receiving face-threatening acts with minimal risk. Most of the book consists of exemplary

studies of the operations of this rhetoric in different kinds of situations: in particular historical letters, in the manuals' models, and in Shakespearean dramatic texts. What is most impressive about these studies is their very close-focus dismantling of these discursive processes, proper quotation of which would push well beyond the limits of available space. Examples from the Sidney letters must suffice, along with a few words about merchants and Shakespeare.

Many occasions for Magnusson's analyses arise from the extraordinary Sidney correspondence, where, Magnusson shows, in addition to the focus of relative social ranking, gradations of "age, gender, family and household position, occupation, affective bond, sexual interest, [and] financial . . . circumstances" all influence power relations. Several conversations receive detailed examination. I will quote from only one, to give some sense of Magnusson's materials. This involves a terse letter of reproach that Philip Sidney wrote his father's secretary Edmund Molyneux, whom he supposed to have interfered in an affair of Fulke Greville's:

I pray yow, for my Sake, yow will not make yowr self an Instrument to crosse my Cosin Fowkes [Greville] Tytle in any Part, or construction of his Letters Patentes. It will turne to other Boddies Good, and to hurte him willingly weare a foolish Discourteisy. I pray yow, as yow make Accownt of me, lett me be sure yow will deale heerin according to my request, and so I leave yow to God. [April 10, 1581] . . . *Your loving Frend*, Philip Sidney.

Molyneux's long and extremely careful reply (of which I quote only the closing portion), is addressed as from "Edmund Molyneux, Esq."; it uses to the full the resources open to him as a respectful but loyal and sagacious — and gentle — family retainer speaking to the youthful son of his master:

. . . yf I showld soe forgett my selfe (yf it were only in Respect that you esteeme Mr. Gryvell as your deere and entier Frend) I should justlie condemne my selfe of vnadvised and twoe great inconsiderat Dealinge. And therefor I pray you, and soe effectuallye desyre him to hold a better Opinion of me, till you have further Prooffe howe I doe deale, and have dealt, in the Cawse from the Begyninge. And as I haue neither Will nor Power to hurt in this Case if I wolde, havinge onlie to walke in the pathe I am directed: So yf I had either, beinge otherwise directed by you, I would not. And therefore beseche you, what soever Cowrse be held in the Matter, lay noe further Fawlt in me, than I justlie deserve: For assure your selfe, you and yours have, and ever shall have, that vndowbted Interest in me, as I will obey your Commaundement, as farre as in Dewtie and Credit I may, which I crave yt maye lyke you to accept. And evenso I take my Leave. [April 28, 1581] . . . Yours ever in all as to be commaunded as your obedient Servant, E. Molyneux.

Magnusson's fascinating analysis of this exchange, equally dilated, accounts for the complex factors of both "mutable" and "permanent" dignities (of employment, birth, and honor, the gentle secretary being technically not far by birth from the birth-rank of his employers); the complexly balanced empowerments of the son and heir who lives away from the head of the family and the gentleman-servant in constant physical attendance; and the as-yet-untitled heir's huge possession of

prospective symbolic capital through his mother's sisterhood with the childless Earls of Leicester and Warwick (a possession, as the next example will show, unavailable in similar measure to Mary Sidney herself, its conduit).

When Mary Sidney writes instructions to Molyneux on how to convince the Lord Chamberlain to make available an extra room at Hampton court for Sir Henry, she exhibits the deep cultural ambiguity of the wife's position *vis-à-vis* the servant. In contrast to her son's terse commands, her letter proposes the venture as a methodically shared strategic enterprise. Molyneux nonetheless replies with as much elaboration as in apologizing to Philip. Mary Sidney's letter works by *associating* writer and reader, while her son's and the secretary's both pursue their quite different goals by *dissociating* the writer from the addressee, taking care to establish and preserve the differences between them, *both* men deriving both entitlement and freedom from such observance.

A third exchange between Sir Henry and the queen affords yet another strategic insight, what Magnusson calls the rhetoric of "trouble-making and trouble-taking" (p. 100). Sidney writes to Elizabeth to defend himself from charges that he has mismanaged the enforcement of the "Cess" (where landholders of the Irish Pale are to board and maintain soldiers garrisoned there). Much of Sir Henry's energy is directed to the queen's complaint that he did not keep her sufficiently informed. He has hated to trouble her with letters because his handwriting is so terrible, he says; nonetheless, hearing of her dissatisfaction with him, he at once took the considerable trouble to write to her at length, despite his hand's embarrassing incompetence; but upon looking at the result, he could not bear to trouble her with it, and so has taken the trouble to have another copy out the letter in a properly legible and respectful hand. Magnusson observes: "The entire Elizabethan dance of civility may be said to turn on this opposition between the imperative to take trouble — to dance attendance — and the imperative to avoid making trouble — to respect distance" (p. 102). Sir Henry's unseen palaeographic incompetence both excuses his silence and enables him to parade an extravagant commitment to appropriate communication.

A longer review of this book would further appreciate Magnusson's fascinating analysis of how the mercantile manuals produce, not the hard-edged and reductive commercial discursivity often associated with early capitalism, but a rich and often florid appropriation of the highly calibrated toolkit of Angel Day, where interactions unfailingly turn on the careful operations of highly personalized deference tactics. Attention would also be given to the rich treatments of the initial scene of *King Lear*, where embarrassment and repair are uncomfortably passed around among Kent, Gloster, and Edmund; the ostentatious exchange of hoary courtesies and often ironized conversational "mistakes" in *Much Ado about Nothing*; and Iago's extraordinary manipulations of the empowerments and disempowerments of speech setting in *Othello*. I have slighted these matters only because of the even greater interest of the theoretical toolkit employed here, and its fascinating capacities to transform the most mundane "documents" (even of

hotel reservations) into burgeoning “texts,” with all the richness such phrasing may carry for literary scholars of early modern English culture. I strongly recommend a close look at this fine book, especially for historians, who so often feel that literary readers seldom pay them back the debt we owe them. This book offers them a substantial remuneration, while moving “prosaics” onto the same plane with poetics. It is a notable accomplishment.

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Joad Raymond, ed. *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*. London: Frank Cass, 1999. Pp. 239.

This volume contributes to a new history of the newspaper which aspires to embrace diverse methodologies and to draw on new archival sources. Essays are arranged chronologically from *circa* 1590 to 1800, covering themes such as control of the content and circulation of news, expanding notions of the participating readership, and the interrelationship between information and commerce with its attendant blurring of the boundaries between news and advertising. Authors combine conventional methods of analytical bibliography with a D. F. McKenzian brand of historical bibliography in considering an array of contemporary sources — plays, poems, sumptuary laws, newsletters, State Papers, petitions, auction catalogues, trade sale catalogues, advertisements — that shed light on news in this period. The following paragraphs offer brief assessments of the individual essays.

Fritz Levy links the development of sixteenth-century newsbooks to Tudor notions of decorum that enforced social distinctions. Just as theatrical productions came under the control of the Master of Revels, who forbade representations of court luminaries, so domestic political news in pamphlets was censored by official licensers and by the practice of being entered in the Stationers' Register. Yet with the growing complexity of politics and the increasing need for information in order to govern, Lévy sees the market for news increasing despite the restrictive traditional decorum of information sharing. Under Elizabeth, the publisher John Wolfe and his associates are allowed to introduce the first “corantos,” small booklets including news from abroad.

Ian Atherton stresses the continuing importance of manuscript newsletters even after the advent of printed news. Such manuscript newsletters were considered by contemporaries to be the most authoritative form of news, and their cost made them available only to the elite. The flood of printed newsbooks let loose by the English Revolution, however, influenced the form of handwritten newsletters after the civil war. In contrast to pre-civil war newsletters, those written in the later seventeenth century became more opinionated and more widely distributed, until by the 1680s the genres of the newsletter and the newspaper had virtually con-