William Gilpin's Letter-Writer

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SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

While William Gilpin's correspondence provides a personal insight into the art of writing letters as it was performed by the theoretician of the picturesque in his familiar exchanges,[1] another set of unpublished letters held in the Bodleian Library constitutes a different type of document. If William Gilpin developed educational principles, as expected from a man who was a school-master for twenty-four years and perceptible from his letters to his grand-son, in which he readily provided various formal and moral teachings, he also used his taste for the writing of letters in organizing a whole epistolary manual, probably destined to the boys of the school in which he taught. The eighteenth century has often been called the century of the letter.[2] William Gilpin's manuscript letter-writer confirms that the period was also that of letter-writing manuals in the British isles.

Letter-writing manuals in eighteenth-century Britain

The writing manual was commonly known under the titles "secretary" or "letter-writer" from the sixteenth century in Britain. It could be defined as a work aiming to help people write letters and it mainly contained numerous examples of letters, sometimes accompanied by theoretical advice.[3] And yet several letter-writers also contained grammars, dictionaries, poems, songs and essays on various topics. The origins of the manual can be traced back to the Roman, Hellenistic and Byzantine cultures.[4] Most

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[1] See Alain Kerhervé, *William Writes to William. The Correspondence of William Gilpin (1724-1804) and his grandson William* (Newcastle: CSP, 2014).

[2] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Laurence (Cambridge: MIT P, 1989) 48 ("the century of the letter").

[3] For that definition, see Geneviève Haroche-Bouzinac, *L'Épistolaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1995) 51.

[4] Terttu Nevalainen, "Letter Writing. Introduction," *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 5.2 (2004), 181-182.

geographical eras use reference works defining epistolographic rules.[5] The
Latin and Greek writers did not try to establish a theory of letter-writing
because they were trying to mimic the conversational style defined in such
oratorical treatises as Cicero's *De inventione*. Still between the eleventh
and the fifteen centuries, a set of strict rules about the composition of the
letter were devised, the *ars dictaminis*.[6]

   The first manuals published in England in the sixteenth century
oscillate between the perpetuation of those Latin formularies, as in
Panoplie of Epistles (1576), and the invention of a new type of work,
influenced by France, since *The Enimie of Idlenesse* (1568) is nothing else
than a translation, by William Fulwood, of a manual published two years
earlier on the continent.[7] In 1586, *The English Secretorie* was the first
English manual to establish a new format, based on model letters written
by the author. Although its theory is largely derived from Erasmus, the
letters are new and humorous. They are adapted to familiar situations,[8] and
their stylistic figures are highlighted in marginal notes, the whole work
being extremely popular and reprinted several times in the following
decades.[9] In the seventeenth century, letter-writers were among the best-

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[5] Seija Tiisala, "Power and Politeness Languages and Salutation Formulas in
Correspondence between Sweden and the German Hanse", *Journal of Historical
Pragmatics* 5.2 (2004): 193-206.

[6] On that point, see Ronald G. Witt, "The Arts of Letter-Writing," *The Middle
Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).
Also see Jean Robertson, *The Art of Letter Writing: An Essay on the Handbooks
Published in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Liverpool:
U of Liverpool P, 1943) 9-24.

[7] The translated work is *Le Stile et maniere de composer, dicter, et escrire toute
sorte d'epistre, ou lettres missives*, 1566 (Lyon: E. Michel, 1579). For more on the
two manuals, see Katherine Gee Hornbeak, "The Complete Letter-Writer in
English 1568-1800," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* 15.3-4 (1934):
3-9; Robertson 13-17.

[8] Webster Newbold, "Traditional, Practical, Entertaining: Two Early English Letter
Writing Manuals," *Rhetorica* 26.3 (2008): 267-300.

[9] Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, "'Best Patterns for your Imitation': Early Modern Letter-
Writing Instruction and Real Correspondence," *Discourse Perspectives on English*,
ed. Risto Hiltunen and Janne Skaffari (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003) 173,
notes that the manual was printed over forty-nine years. The *English Short Title
Catalogue* holds ten editions, dated 1586, 1592, 1595, 1599, 1607, 1614, 1621,
1625 and 1635. For more detail on *The English Secretorie*, see Hornbeak 17-29,
25-29.

sellers in England.[10] That success came mainly from the rivalry of the English and French schools,[11] with such works as *A Poste with a Packet* (1602) by Nicholas Breton,[12] *The Prompters Packet* (1612), *A President for Young Pen Men* (1612) and *A Speedie Poste* (1625, 1629) for the former, or *The Academy of Complements* by Philomusus [John Gough ?] (1639) and *The Young Secretary's Guide; or, Speedy Help to Learning* (1687) by John Hill, largely modeled on the French works of Puget de la Serre[13] and Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac.[14] Recent epistolographic criticism, summarised by James Daybell,[15] estimates that the total of manuals produced amounts to eighteen editions for the sixteenth century, eighty-one for the seventeenth century.[16] The figures rose to at least two hundred and sixty editions in the eighteenth century.

The following graph (Fig. 1) shows the number of editions of each o the eighty-eight titles printed between 1700 and 1800 in the British isles.[17] While about one third (37 titles) was published once only, one third (29) were printed two or three times, one third between four and fifteen times, seven titles reaching ten editions; the two most popular being *The New Academy of Compliments* (14 editions) and *The Young Secretary's Guide* (15).

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[10] Six manuals are listed in William London, *A Catalogue of the Most Vendible Bookes in England* (1657), as demonstrated by Louis B. Wright, "Handbook Learning of the Renaissance Middle Class," *Studies in Philology* 28.1 (1931): 69-70.

[11] See Lawrence D. Green, "French Letters and English Anxiety in the Seventeenth Century," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66.3/4 (2003): 263-274.

[12] The manual was first published in 1539 (vol. 1) and in 1545 (vol. 2), and translated several times into English between 1574 and 1697. See Irving, William Henry. *The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers* (Durham: Duke UP, 1955) 58-61.

[13] *Le Secrétaire de la Cour* (Lyon : chez P. Muguet, 1646); *Le Secrétaire à la mode* (Amsterdam : J. Janssen, 1655); *Le Secrétaire du cabinet* (Paris : N. Le Gras, 1680).

[14] *Lettres du sieur de Balzac* (Paris : T. Du Bray, 1624).

[15] James Daybell, "Recent Studies in Sixteenth-Century Letters," *English Literary Renaissance* 35 (2005): 331-362.

[16] Searching "Letter writing – Early works to 1800" in the *English Short Title Catalogue* gives a total of eighty-nine manuals printed before the year 1700.

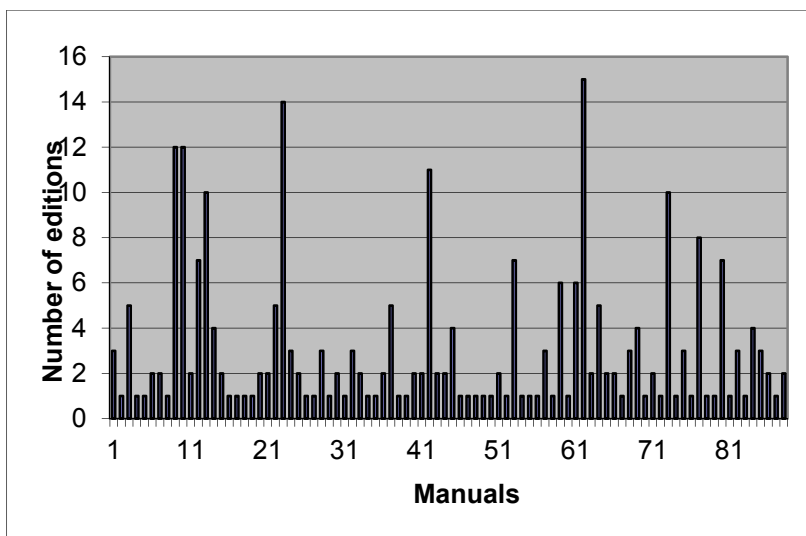[17] For a full list of the 88 titles, see Appendix.

Fig. 1. Number of editions of each letter-writing manual[18]

Although a proportion of those manuals were authored anonymously (34 of them) or by individuals of lesser fame, several productions became associated with famous men of letters. Laurence Sterne's name is advertised, in capital letters, on the front page of *The Complete Letter-Writer* in 1778, ten years after his death, at a time when his works and letters gather rising public interest. The lexicographer Samuel Johnson is said, in the anonymous prefaxe to *The Correspondent* to have been involved in writing such a manual:

> Amongst the literary projects of the late Dr. Johnson, which death prevented his executing, and which are enumerated by his biographer, Mr. Boswell, two are mentioned under the following titles: 'A Book of Letters on all Kinds of Subjects;' and 'A Collection of Letters from English Authors, with a Preface, giving some Account of the Writers, with Reasons for the Selection, and Criticism of their Styles, and Remarks on each Letter if necessary.' […]The authority of so great a name, is sufficient to establish the fact of a publication of this kind being necessary, and useful. (iii-iv)[19]

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[18] For the full reference of each manual, numbered 1 to 88, see Appendix.
[19] The origin of the quote attributed to Boswell may be *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, 13 vols. (London: J. Buckland, *et al.*, 1787) 1: 81 ("Book of Letters") and 83 ("A Collection of Letters … if needful").

Johnson's intended production confers legitimacy to the actual work. Moreover, two manuals were devised by the famous novelists Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson. Daniel Defoe started to write the letters and theoretical parts of the three works he produced[20] towards the end of his literary life, after writing *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*; Samuel Richardson's *Familiar Letters* (1741) are commonly thought to have been at the origin of his epistolary novels. The two authors having educational views in mind, which they thought to be necessary in a deliquescent society.[21]

Several editors were also clergymen, although often more concerned with non-religious production than with religious writings, for instance the traveler and hedonist John Savage (1673-1747),[22] the eccentric Thomas Cooke (1722-1783),[23] who spent several years in Bedlam, John Duncombe (1729-1786),[24] husband of the poetess Susannah Highmore or Henry Scougal (1650-1678), Church of Scotland minister, latitudinarian and author of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. [25]

As a consequence, it should not be surprising to discover that William Gilpin, who was both a clergyman and a writer of various tours and essays[26] also decided to produce a letter-writing manual, even though it

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[20] Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman, in Familiar Letters* (London: printed for Charles Rivington at the Bible and Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, [1725?], 1726, 1727, 1732, 1738, 1745).

[21] On that point, see Victoria Myers, "Model Letters, Moral Living: Letter-Writing Manuals by Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66.3/4 (2003): 373.

[22] William Marshall, "Savage, John (1673-1747)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24719 [27 August 2011].

[23] Thompson Cooper, "Cooke, Thomas (1722-1783)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6181 [28 August 2011].

[24] M. John Cardwell, "Duncombe, John (1729-1786)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8237 [27 August 2011].

[25] Clare Jackson, "Scougal, Henry (1650-1678)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24941 [28 August 2011].

[26] See Alain Kerhervé, *William Writes to William. The Correspondence of William Gilpin (1724-1804) and his grandson William* (Newcastle: CSP, 2014).

was never printed. The manuscript manual is published in the present volume for the first time.

The unachieved manuscript

In the catalogue of the Bodleian Library, the letters composing William Gilpin's letter-writer were initially described as "fictional letters."[27] The document is made up of 167 numbered folios comprising 139 neatly individualised letters. Some are classified in several series: folios 1 to 70 are numbered 1 to 65; next come 20 folios numbered III to XXII in Roman figures; folios 93 to 126 are numbered 1 to 34, while the last forty folios are unsurprisingly unclassified since they contain parts of letters (folios 141, 155, 157) which correspond to the end of messages situated in the previous sections. The size of the page is different from the commonly used format in the Gilpin family. The page is much smaller. Folios 1 to 138 are 10,3 cm x 16,8 cm, folios 139 to 166 are 12,7 cm x 20,5 cm. This can be explained by the reduced length of the letters, which are made of an average of 220 words,[28] but also matches the pocket-book format of the letter-writers of the period.

As in letter-writing manuals, most letters have headers such as: "From a young gentleman to his friend" (WGM 1),[29] "The Father to his Son in Consequence" (WGM 17), "From the son. Ludgate" (WGM 100), "Mr. D., arrived at the East-Indies, writes then to his father" (WGM 105), one of them pretending that the letter is translated from the French language ("A translation of a letter, from Father de Puisne, confessor to the Abbey of S–, to General S.," WGM 62), which rules out the possibility that those were drafts of letters that were actually sent since those headers are not added *a posteriori* on the pages but occupy a significant place which certifies that they were written prior to the rest of the letter. Moreover, the letters bear very little interest to the names of the correspondents. Since they were probably thought to be interchangeable, the first names and surnames are often reduced to initials, which are very little varied from one letter to another. For instance, Mr. B. in letter 65 is not the same person as the Mr. B. who corresponds with Captain B. and Brigadier B in the previous

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[27] Mary Clapinson, and Tim D. Rogers, *Summary Catalogue of Post-Medieval Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford. Acquisitions 1916-1975*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1991) 1: 431 ("42462. A collection of fictional letters").

[28] 30,500 words in 139 letters.

[29] The abbreviation WGM refers to the letters of William Gilpin's manual edited in the present book, p. 23-180.

letters.[30] In a similar way, many letters being exchanged between a father and a son, in most cases, the son's first name is John. The exemplary nature of the manual was compatible with that kind of approximation.

If the reduced attention paid to names can be somewhat confusing, other elements confirm that the manual was not completed. The above-mentioned absence of continuity of the page numbers is one of them. The text also contains many corrections and deletions which were operated at the time of writing but also afterwards, possibly by a different person, correcting the original repetitions and style effects in red ink.[31] Many Gilpin manuscripts held in the Bodleian Library bear the marks of corrections by Catherine Brisco, William Gilpin's cousin, who lived with him at the end of his life and read his writings with pen in hand before publication.[32] It may have been the case for the present manuscript. But several persons may also have read and amended the documents, judging from the two names mentioned on letters 49 and 64. Formal negligence can also be ascribed to the unachieved status of the manuscript: some abbreviations are used systematically "C" for "and" and "y^t" ("that"), "y^r" ("your"), "y^m" ("them"), others are very frequent "y^e" ("the"), "tho" ("though") et "$\overline{m}$" ("mm" within words), "affect." ("affectionate"), "col." ("colonel"). The closing formulae are also very frequently omitted or reduced to a short "I am &c" in most cases. It was also occasionally the case in certain epistolary manuals,[33] but not as systematically as in

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[30] The author of those letters occasionally confuses the initials of the various correspondents: the letter B associated with "Brigadier" in folio 50 is corrected from the letter D which had initially be written. Conversely, the letter D. associated with the Major at the top of folio 51 replaces a B which had first been penned.

[31] The corrections are not always systematic and lack coherence: while the age of the young man is modified from "seventeen" to "sixteen" in folio 4, it is not in folio 6.

[32] Many of them are listed in Clapinson and Rogers's detailed catalogue, 1: 425 (42 405, "Observations on the coast of Hampshire"), 1: 428 (42 423 et 42 425, "Observations […] on different parts of the West"), 1: 430 (42 454-42 456, "Memoirs of Naimbanna"), 1: 432 (42470, "Observations on domestic poultry").

[33] See *The Complete Letter-Writer; or, Polite English Secretary*(1756) with its pages of abbreviations (10-11) followed by: "But use not contractions, except in private affairs, or where it would be ridiculous to write at length, as *Mr.* for *Master*; *Mrs.* for *Mistress*; *Sr.* for *Sir*; *&c.* for *and so forth*; because they are often puzzling to others, and argue disrespect, when used to superiors." Tavernier, in *The Entertaining Correspondent* (1759) uses the same advice (6-7), as well as *The Court Letter-Writer* (1773). In 1759, John Gignoux, in *Epistolary Correspondence Made Pleasant and Familiar*, rewrites the rule: "be particularly careful in not

William Gilpin's manuscript. Those formulae may have been completed or substituted in a final version of the work.

The manuscript in the Bodleian Library being undated, one can wonder about the date of the document. Several dates appear in different places in the folios, but whether they are fictional or not remains uncertain. They are gathered, in chronological order, in the following table.

Date	Folio
July 1749	Fol. 132
20th March 1764	Fol. 50
18 April 1766	Fol. 70
24 April 1766	Fol. 50
1768	Fol. 6
21 Aug. 1775	Fol. 111
28 Nov. 1777	Fol. 167

Fig. 2. Dates in William Gilpin's manual

The date "July 1749" on folio 132 is the only one which corresponds with the content of the letter, the writer of which says that he was shipwrecked onto a Malaysian island, six years earlier, on 20 June 1743. The other dates are independent of the content of the letters and closer in time. They range over a period of thirteen years, between 1764 and 1777. Some of them are associated with the names of persons, which remain un-identifiable, for instance at the end of folio 50, where two names are written in two different hand-writings: "Daniele Cholmley, March the 20th 1764" and "John Quintin 24 April 1766"; the back of folio 6 reads "Cha[rle]s Rush 1768"; the bottom of folio 70, "William Whitmore 18 April 1766; John Quintin, 18 April 1766." The fourth page of folio 111 contains the beginning of a letter the first four lines of which are crossed. The model letter written on the page must have been written after the date 21 August 1775 which is very legible in the top right hand corner. The last letter of the manuscript, folio 167 is dated 28 November 1777. And yet the date is not placed at the end of the letter, as it may have been to complete the writing of a manuscript but at the beginning of the letter, which makes

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omitting any letter belonging to the word you write, as I've, can't, don't, shou'd, wou'd, &c. for such contractions not only appear disrespectful, and too familiar; but discover (those almost inseparable companions) ignorance and impudence" (8).

it more difficult to tell between the possibility of a fictional date chosen for the letter and the real date of the completion of the manuscript.

Those dates are combined with a number of historical references within the letters. Several messages are sent during the period of the War of Austrian Succession, more precisely at the moment when the French forces conquer Namur, in September 1746. A young man is enlisted in Blands's Dragoons (WGM 16) heading for Namur (WGM 23) to face the French and Bavarians, and then marching on (WGM 32) to extract the enemies from their entrenchment, which corresponds to the events of September 1746. In folio 113, a young man arrives in India, writing, over several years from Fort Saint George (WGM 105-110), without mentioning the capture of the place by the French, which must correspond to post 1749 events. Other letters mention a ship, *HMS Monmouth* (WGM 106), first launched in 1772; a war binding some English ships at Cork, which may refer to the revolutionary wars which started in Spring 1793 and in which the English organized convoys from Cork to escort their merchant ships, as mentioned in another letter (WGM 111). So it seems to be reasonable to estimate that the manuscript was written between 1764 and 1793, the change in page numbers on the folios 71, 93 and 134 suggesting that the whole may have been composed at different moments.

The letters are autograph letters by William Gilpin, even if certain clues may suggest that it is not the case: certain letters are signed, the signature being crossed out in most places, as if the writer had automatically signed them in a somewhat mechanical manner (out of epistolary habit), although the initials are never William Gilpin's. However one can also imagine that the first intention may have been to have the letters signed from the initial of fictitious writers, as in other printed manuals, but that the prospect was later cancelled. The names above "Daniele Cholmley, March the 20th 1764" and "John Quintin 24 April 1766" might also be those of contributors to the manual. And yet, the handwriting is, from the beginning to the end of the manuscript, quite similar to William Gilpin's in the 1760s. For instance, the handwriting can be compared with that of two autograph letters sent to Peggy Gilpin, on 21 December 1763 and on 1 June 1768.[34] Not only does the juxtaposition of the two series highlight the proximity of the handwriting but it also foregrounds the similarity of the abbreviations which are systematically the same. While some were common in the eighteenth century, most are

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[34] See Bodleian Library, Ms Eng Misc b 73, fol. 23 and 25.

adapted by William Gilpin: "the," "your," "that" and "them" are made of a half circle followed by the subscripted ending to compose "y^e," "y^r," "y^t" et "y^m"; never fully spelt, "and" is systematically replaced by a large "C", representing a sort of ampersand. Specific to William Gilpin's writing, they clearly establish that the manual was written by William Gilpin.[35] The hypothesis that he just copied the letters is very unlikely since the text is frequently corrected, crossed out and occasionally rephrased.

"Your"   "and"

Fig. 3. Two frequent abbreviations of William Gilpin's

A number of parallels may also be drawn between William Gilpin's life and some of the events associated with some of the letter writers in the manual. A few names, a few titles may derive directly from his own experience: the young Captain in the first sixty folios is a father figure, since John Bernard Gilpin was a Captain too.[36] When a student at Oxford, William Gilpin exchanged letters with John Brown, of Carlisle, who asked the student's advice on his poetry, liked to talk literature with him and offered a number of suggestions about Gilpin's future career.[37] This mentor-figure may have been at the origin of the name of the young man's master in the first seventy folios. The colonel's wife is named Betty, which

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[35] For examples of abbreviations commonly used by men at the time, see Susan M. Fitzmaurice, "Epistolary Identity: Convention and Idiosyncrasy in Late Modern English Letters," *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence*, *Linguistic Insights* 76 (2008): 85-86.

[36] His military career is mentioned by Barbier, *William Gilpin* 4, and by Templeman, *The Life and Work of William Gilpin* 21-22.

[37] Some of John Brown's letters are held in the Bodleian Library, Ms. Eng. Misc. c. 389, fol. 58-87. More precisely, see fol. 65-66, letter dated 29 September 1743 (advice on his studies and financing a Master's degree; he calls William Gilpin Bill at the beginning of several letters [fol. 73 et 76]); fol. 72, letter dated 8 October 1744 (his desire to help William Gilpin and invitation to visit him at Carlisle). John Brown also tells William Gilpin of his sister's husband's death in 1745 (fol. 73, 75). For more detail on John Brown, see James E. Crimmins, "Brown, John (1715-1766)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3621 [Accessed August 2011]. Templeman shows that John Brown, after promising to fund William Gilpin's Master's degree, backs out of the project. Templeman, *The Life and Work of William Gilpin* 39.

recalls William Gilpin's wife, Elizabeth, whom he occasionally addressed as Betty, for instance on 7 August 1744: "Now my dear Betty";[38] the use of the name "Clarke" (fol. 161) may also have been suggested by a friend of that name.[39] Certain events must have been taken from the life of George Potter, William Gilpin's friend at Oxford, whose biography he later wrote more extensively.[40] The young man, who was gifted but not sufficiently hard-working ("the idlest boy and the best scholar," fol. 160), talkative and loved by all (fol. 163-165), went to fight in Flanders (fol. 171-172), spent his money extravagantly and died early at the age of thirty-five (fol. 185).

The style of the letters of the manual also recalls that of William Gilpin's personal letters, for instance in two crossed-out pages which smack of the tours of the theoretician of the picturesque:

> Did you ever travel between Wallingford and Reading? Between these two places, about a quarter of a mile from the Thames, he has chosen his seat. It was an old house, formerly belonging to Lord [S.] which, with the estate about it 2,000 a year, he has purchased. I know not whether England perhaps produces a more agreeable spot. You have water, wood, hill, and valley / diversified in the most agreeable and picturesque manner. – I might add romantic, but not the wild romantic nature, which you have sometimes heard me admire. But possibly you may know the country. However the country, beautiful as it is, was the least part of my pleasure. The inside of the house afforded the more beautiful prospect. (fol. 120)

The decomposition of the natural elements of the landscape – « water, wood, hill and valley » –, the reference to the « picturesque manner », the interest for architecture are all part and parcel of William Gilpin's centres of interest. Besides, the letter is said to have been written by a "Mr. G.", and the moral and religious principles laid out by the paternal figures (most often fathers) also match William Gilpin's ideas, as developed in other places of his literary, religious and epistolary production, which contribute to form a set of model letters.

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[38] See Bodleian Library, MS Eng Misc b 73, fol. 9. However, another letter sent to his sister on 13 October 1742 begins with "Dear Sister" (MS Eng Misc b 73, fol. 11).

[39] Some letters from William Gilpin to Samuel Clarke are held in the Bodleian Library, Eng. Misc. d. 578.

[40] See Bodleian Library, Eng. Misc. d. 568, fol. 160-214.

Models of letters

The letters of William Gilpin's manual abide by the rhetorical rules which were defined in previous letter-writers or secretaries as they were called from the sixteenth century. Addressed to a soldier, letter 67 is composed by the book: it is made of seven paragraphs of equal length, with regular indentation. The first paragraph serves an expository function, the letter writer making it clear that he writes to the young soldier at his father's request to offer him the advice that is found in the next paragraphs. The last paragraph begins with "To conclude." The initial formulae of the letters passing between landowners and farmers are also extremely strict, the former calling the latter "Sir," while the tenants always use "honoured Sir." In every day correspondence, the initial formula occasionally evolved with the feelings of the writer. A similar evolution can also be perceived in the case of the young soldier who continues to keep his distance with the Colonel he does not appreciate ("Sir" [WGM 18]), although the latter, a friend of his father's, wants to help and protect him and be on friendly terms with him ("dear Jack" [WGM 19]). A few letters begin *in medias res*, inserting the name of the recipient in the initial sentence, sometimes to express the writer's anxiety (WGM 11, 21) or his profound disagreement, his anger, his grief (WGM 82). Formality is then replaced by passion.

The closing formulae are globally neglected, which is quite unexpected from William Gilpin whose family paid particular attention to such important moments, judging from a message written by William Gilpin to his future wife in which he reproaches her with concluding a previous letter with "believe me &c." in the following words: "Believe me your ever faithful and affectionate lover – Will: Gilpin. / PS. I don't think you show the warmth of your affection when you put &c instead of this."[41] The manual still contains a number of full endings, in particular when a father regrets his son's attitude and finishes with "your afflicted father" (WGM 76), "your most afflicted father" (WGM 82) or "your poor afflicted father" (WGM 96). Besides, in certain cases, the reduced space at the bottom of the page explains the use of "yours &c." which is then positioned on the same line as the last words of the letter, while it is commonly placed a few lines below in the other cases. The manuscript being some sort of draft, the closing formulae may have been expanded previous to the printing of its

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[41] Quoted in Peter Benson, *My Dearest Betsy: Self-Portrait of William Gilpin, 1757-1848, from His Letters and Diaries* (London: Dobson Books Ltd, 1981) 53.

final version; still one letter (WGM 19) passes some ironical commentary on epistolary formulae: the ending in "I am &c." being followed by "Amen" with no other possible justification within the content of the letter than that of a metatextual assessment.

As in many letter-writing manuals in the eighteenth century, the letters are rarely isolated, even if it is the case with a few of them (WGM 65-70, 120-122). Most letters are part of series of several units. The first seventy folios constitute a miniature epistolary novel, in which the life of a young man, named Jack (WGM 19) or John (WGM 37), is followed over several years in the letters he exchanges with several men – his father, his master when an apprentice, his Colonel when a soldier – those mentors also exchanging letters to discuss the young man's education. The communication scheme is represented in the following chart in which each arrow represents an epistolary exchange of at least one letter:
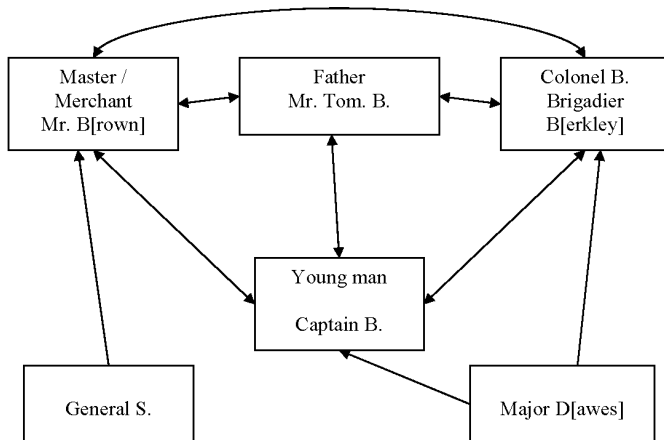

Fig. 4. Exchanges in the first part of the manual

Letters 76 to 81 constitute another set of reduced size, which is about the solving of a conflict by talking and not by dueling; folios 82 to 89 deal with the misadventures of a debauched apprentice; the next set (folios 90-92), those of a son who is executed for stealing. Folios 93 to 122 are made of a succession of exchanges between a father and his son's debtors, followed by those of the repented son emigrated to India. Folios 123 to 126 are exchanges between landowners and farmers. Although most of the last letters (folios 141-167) do not compose a followed exchange, they

deal with the importance of school education for young men and are in many ways complementary.

The reduced and standardized size of the letters, in comparison to those of William Gilpin's correspondence, their linguistic, rhetorical and moral coherence confirm the idea that they were meant to be models to young boys whom the schoolmaster or the father invited to copy. When she inventoried William Gilpin's papers to be preserved at the time of his removal, Catherine Brisco noted:

> When Mr. Gilpin left Cheam in the year 1778, among several things committed to my care, were a great number of papers, and MSS, some to return when called for, others to amuse myself, others to destroy or do what I would with, – among the latter, were several copy-books, filed with copies of letters, by way of exercise for his eldest son during the latter years of his being with him, for as it was necessary for him to improve his hand, -- his stile; and readiness in writeing, his father when he used to fall in his way out of school hours, or holidays, used to bid him take copys of any letters that happened to be lying unsealed on the table – of course numbers of them were very uninteresting; but seeing among them others, that deserved a better fate, I never could bring myself to destroy them unlooked over, I have destroyed the whole of them.[42]

If no direct allusion is made to the letter-writing manual, it still highlights the importance, to William Gilpin, of copying letters, which must have led to that form of theoretical enterprise. He also envisaged, at another stage, to write a grammar, a geography book and other manuals destined to children, boys in particular. Indeed, those letters are, in many ways, a real letter-writer, devised for many occasions.

Exemplary letters for men

All the letters are written by men and addressed to men, with the exception of two (WGM 109 et 110) which are sent to mothers at their husband's death. The centres of interest are mainly inter-generational and concern questions of power and authority. The figure of authority is that of the father, who occasionally hands over to a trustworthy friend or relative who acts as a substitute while sending letters to the father to inform him of his son's activities. The word "master" is thus used both for the school authority and for the tradesman in charge of the apprentice. In those cases, when the boy is at school, the master lets his father know of his attitude

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[42] Barbier, *William Gilpin* 186.

and progress; when the child is working as an apprentice, the master also sends letters to his father, at regular intervals. The case is not different when the young man is a soldier: his superior also writes to his father. It clearly shows that the definition of virility comes more from the approbation of another man, whom one estimates, than from any expression of superiority or domination.[43]

William Gilpin's manual mainly promotes a laborious world in which money is earned with effort in a reasonable professional activity. In the fathers' minds a neat dichotomy is perceived between a commercial and a military career.[44] The trade represents a form of security, for instance when the activity passes from father to son, as a father explains to his son whom he has just managed to place as an apprentice: "Your father, your grand father, your ancestors, time out of mind, have all been men of business: and what influence I have, lies solely in the mercantile way" (WGM 4). Thus ideally predisposed, the child can only succeed (WGM 14), and the exchanges between master and apprentice occupy a consequent place in the manual which illustrates the role performed by the father who gets the position for his son and settles the financial conditions of the apprenticeship by letter (WGM 6-7) or who tells the merchant that his son will stop working for him (WGM 12); the exchanges also express growing sympathy between apprentice and master after years of collaboration (WG fol. 22, 32, 54) even if in other places the tradesman must write to the father to complain of his son's behaviour (WGM 75-82). The commercial exchanges is also that of tradesmen who have to write letters to have people pay their debts, as illustrated in many letters from London merchants, tailors, drapers, viners (WGM 89, 90), that of farmers whose wealth depends on the tenants of their farms (WGM 114-177), that of the merchants of the East Indies Society who make a fortune abroad, by chance, finding out new tinctures on a semi-desert island (WGM 121), or by opportunity for the one who becomes the governor of Fort Saint George (WGM 110) after making a career in the East India Company (WGM 106,

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[43] This is very well illustrated by the example of the Pickering brothers developed by John Gilbert McCurdy, "'Your Affectionate Brother' Complementary Manhoods in the Letters of John and Timothy Pickering," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4.2 (2006): 512-545.
[44] That opposition can also be found in one of the letters in Edward Thompson, *Sailor's Letters. Written to his Select Friends in England, during His Voyages and Travels in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1766) 83.

108), the two of them going through a number of personal sacrifices before returning back home as rich men.

Another possible professional career is the army: the young war heroes become honorable men (WGM 25, 67), and their families are all the more pleased and proud as they receive news from officers of superior rank:

> As to Jack, he has made his fortune. He has shewn himself what I always thought him. Upon my credit, Tom, I would give both my legs for such a boy: He would be support enough to my old age. I do as firmly believe, that next to his Grace, the whole fortune of the day was owing to him, as I believe any article in my creed. For if it had not been for him, the battery had not been taken, and if the battery had not been taken it would have disordered our right wing and the disorder of our right wing would in all probability have disordered the whole. — Well I can say no more, but that I heartily give you joy of such a youth. The tears stand in my eyes, when I think of him. / He shames us veterans. (WGM 25)

If the present message favors the sentimental touch, while another one gives epic and pessimistic detail, it does highlight the triumph of a hero, whose wound is not serious and who is soon promoted to the grade of Captain (WGM 32). The soldiers also exchange letters with their families at home (WGM 30, 31, 34, 39) and with their superiors, for instance when asking for a leave (WGM 41 et 44). Those situations were commonly neglected by the letter-writing manuals of the century. And yet, the letter occupies a central position in commercial and military careers.

Not only does the manual support the independence of young men, but it also constitutes a warning against the vices of society, which may cause their ruin. While the young man is initially good by nature, he occasionally meets people who drive him off the right track. Among the excesses he can become a victim of lies excessive alcohol consumption as denounced by a young soldier reacting to his Colonel's enticing his men to drink:

> Perhaps you do not know that the Colonel is not merely a great drinker himself, but a very violent promoter of drinking in others. I spent an evening lately with him and some other officers. You know I never drink any thing: Upon which the Colonel insisted in so rude a manner that although I was determined to persist in my resolution of not drinking, in spite of him, and did persist in it, yet, he made me spend one of the most disagreeable evenings I ever spent in my life. (WGM 20)

The soldier writing to his father resists temptation, to his father's delight. Still, although the son assures his father that he can resist the collective

pressure of a group of men, he eventually yields to temptation, but it leads him to his death since he is killed when trying to enter a convent in which he wanted to meet the young woman he was trying to seduce. Once again, it was not his nature, he had been enticed by a friend to follow the young woman (WGM 61). Among the other bad habits, many men swear (WGM 17, 127, 131) and spend money on such vices as game or alcohol, but also on nice clothes (WGM 94-97). The social game also leads to duels, a condemnable practice in William Gilpin's words, as he expresses in two letters of the manual (WGM 20, 70), and in many other writings.[45] It should not be surprising that some men, blinded by that world of leisure and appearances end up in a state of complete destitution. Consequently, the threat of those masculine ills should be learnt from their early youth, by stressing the importance of the attitude at school, as performed by a father:

> Boys do not consider, that they generally retain for life the characters, which they gain at school. I do not mean, that every little boy fixes his character: I mean only such boys, as are at the upper end of the school. I know at this time many sly, cunning rascals; who were formerly tricking artful boys: and many lawless, insolent, imperious fellows, who were once tyrants at school. (WGM 133)

Scholarly education is thus perceived as the means to learn social life and must be understood to be by young children.

By way of epistolary *exemplum*, several consecutive letters providing various viewpoints, such moral values as honesty, fidelity are highlighted, to which religiosity should be added.[46] The idle farmer inclined to leisure (WGM 114 et 115) sees his stock confiscated until he improves, while the good farmer is offered money and credit (WGM 116 et 117). Many letters also establish links between school and life. Echoing Locke's views,

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[45] That is frequent in William Gilpin's writings whether in his letters to his grandson or in his essays. See, for instance, Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807) 217-252 ("On duelling") and Bodleian Library, Ms. Eng. Misc. d. 569, fol. 210, letter to his son William, 22 March 1796: "I began lately a little dialogue on duelling." Also see Ms. Eng. Misc. e. 518, fol. 73 and fol. 77.

[46] One notices that the name "Mr. Brown" in folio 56 echoes many other usages of "Mr. B." in the manual. The fact that it is one of the most common surnames in England also confers universal value to his ideas. "Mr Brown" is also chosen by Gilpin to give an example in *An Account of a New Poor House* (London: printed at the Philanthropic Reform, [1796?]) 16-18.

several exchanges between parents and boarders show that while a child is
naturally good, he is weak and easily corrupted by bad companions. Since
to err is human, redemption is sometimes offered as a possible outlet,
when a young man who was the cause of his family's bankruptcy for
running into considerable debt makes a fortune in India and pays
everything back (WGM 106, 107). However, his redemption is only
accessed after imprisonment (WGM 100), exile (WGM 105) and hard
work. In other cases, redemption is not possible, for instance in the case of
the young man who dies at a convent's door (WGM 61-64) or for the son
who steals money from his parents, becomes a highwayman and is
condemned to death (WGM 83-85). The latter example is all the more
interesting as William Gilpin had imagined a different ending in the first
draft of the series of letters: "He has since however made such application
he could that he has obtained a pardon from the king." But the sentence
was crossed and replaced by: "He has since made what application he
could, but to no purpose. Friday next the judge has ordered for his
execution" (WGM 85). Some romanesque trend may have induced a
reader into wanting to see the man's life spared, the moral and religious
content of the manual matters more.[47]

   The letter-writer also contains letters destined to older men having to
face some difficult situations, such as the misdeeds of their sons, the
collection of debts or the lies of their farmers. And yet one can wonder if
the moral message passed to the elderly is as explicit as it is to the
youngsters: on the one hand, men can be either harsh or lenient on their
farmers, which echoes the first of William Gilpin's *Moral Contrasts*, in
which Willoughby is generous while James Leigh is not, and the epistolary
formulae adapt to the situations; one can also wonder about the model
presented by a father who relentlessly pays for his son's debts ("not so
weak as to pay" [WGM 93]). It may be explained by the idea that man
being naturally good, he will amend naturally. However, it can hardly be
defended on moral grounds since the young man is encouraged into
spending lavishly by the certitude that his father will pay for him; nor can
it be defensible on religious grounds since it excludes the possibility of the
son's repenting. The question is all the more topical as John, William
Gilpin's eldest son had decided to leave to America and when he wanted
him to return to England, his father decided to refuse to send him the

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[47] For another alteration, see WGM 3, note. The end of the letter first read:
"Whatever you do, you will have always attending you the very sincere prayers of
[...]." This could be morally questionable since it could mean that his cousin would
still love him even though he did not listen to his father.

money he requested as explained in a letter to Reverend Clarke, in 1786: "I have sent about 500 pounds more than the two thousand, I originally gave him: but I see it is throwing money into a gulph; and I have told him I can send no more; but he must come home."[48] Difficult as it may seem to be, hence the importance of sharing it with a clergyman, William Gilpin's decision is contrary to that of the manual in which the father carries on paying his son's unreasonable expenses. It still bears a sign of hope since the only example of paternal resistance in the manual (WGM 98) first leads his son to sincere repentance, then permits him to achieve personal and commercial success.

So the manual tries to establish how the collective importance of moral instruction and the common rules of epistolary writing can hardly be separated from more personal if not intimate writings when one intends to write a letter. Those concerns, inherent in Samuel Richardon's *Familiar Letters* and in his epistolary novels, were also central to William Gilpin's correspondence with his grand-son William.[49]

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[48] Bodleian Library, Ms. Eng Misc. D. 578, fol. 737, letter dated 20 September 1786.
[49] See Alain Kerhervé, *William Writes to William. The Correspondence of William Gilpin (1724-1804) and his grandson William* (Newcastle: CSP, 2014).