

A Woman broken & distracted in her mind:
Evaluative Language of Attitude used in Petitions of
the Salem Witch Trials of 1692

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This study was conducted to understand how petitioners use language to portray people accused of witchcraft as innocent, trustworthy, and undeserving of the punishment they were to face. This study of petitions from the Salem witch trials of 1692 to 1693 draws on material from 19 petitions collected in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (2009). The petitions were selected because they shared a genre and purpose, were written at the height of the witch trials, and sought to defend the victims.

The study combines qualitative close reading of evaluative language, using the Appraisal Framework by Martin and White (2005), with quantitative findings to identify evaluative instances and their targets. The primary focus was on the Attitude system and its three subcategories: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation.

The findings demonstrate that the subcategory of Judgment is the dominant category emerging from the texts. The analysis shows that petitioners repeatedly portray the accused as morally pious, honest, and socially respectable, in contrast to the negative portrayal of the accusations, evidence, and legal process. Appreciation and Affect appear less often and are used to support the main argumentation based on moral reasoning. This study indicates that petitioners drew on evaluative language to emphasize the accused's morally approved behavior, to support their defense, and to prompt the reader to question the accusations presented. However, given this study's limited scope, further research is needed to investigate this topic more comprehensively.

Keywords: Early Modern English, witch trials, Salem, petitions, appraisal framework.

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1 Introduction

This study focuses on the evaluative language contained in the legal documents of Salem Village's witch trials from 1692 to 1693. In comparison with the older cases written in Old and New England, a remarkable number of documents have survived from the witch trials that occurred between 1692 and 1693 in Massachusetts to this day, and they have been studied numerous times in studies across academic fields (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 44). As the texts were written during the later stages of the Early Modern English period (c. 1500–1700), the standardized form of the English language began to replace the complexity of medieval English (see e.g. Nevalainen 2006), therefore making the documents fairly close to Present-Day English and also plausible to study their language more closely.

As discussed above, a significant number of original documents from the Salem episode have survived, consisting of approximately 950 records that document the numerous steps of the legal system used in the 'Old Continent' (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 45). In this thesis, I have chosen to study the evaluative language used in the petitions, a text category in which the documents were written to secure the prisoner's release (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 68). In other words, what kinds of evaluative language can be found in the petitions, and what is the proportion of Attitudinal items of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation? I will illustrate how the petitioners used evaluative language in the petitions to build arguments in support of their goal of defending the accused.

The episode of witch trials raged throughout Europe from the early 15th century until 1782, when the last known legal execution for witchcraft was carried out in Switzerland (see Thurston 2007). However, the European continent was not the only one swept into this crisis. The fear of witches and witchcraft reached the North American continent, and the most notable crisis unfolded in a New England colony in Massachusetts, Salem Village. Starting in the winter of 1692, Salem Village and its surrounding smaller communities faced their own witchcraft crisis. What began as a few complaints of witchcraft soon snowballed into a flood of accusations (see Rosenthal et al. 2009). Despite the popular belief and media portrayal that the episode involved enormous bonfires to burn the witches, only 19 people were executed, and some even escaped their sentences (see Thurston 2001). However, the Salem witch crisis deserves its place as one of the most well-known incidents, as it grew to significant proportions given the size of the community and how thoroughly it was recorded.

An outstanding amount of material, considering the size of the episode, has survived from the Salem Village witchcraft outbreak; approximately 950 court records, of which ca. 60 are petitions (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 65). However, in the scope of this thesis, I will select a feasible number of petitions to analyze, as it would be considerably difficult to identify Attitudinal items from all of these texts.

The primary materials, the petitions from the Salem Village witch crisis, were drawn from the book *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (2009), the first comprehensive collection of records from the Salem witch trials. This thesis adopts the Appraisal Framework as its methodological approach, building on the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) model developed by M. A. K. Halliday and his colleagues in the 1990s (Martin and White 2005, xi, 1). Given AF's size and complexity, I will use one of its three main categories, Attitude, and its subcategories Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, for the analysis (Martin & White 2005, 42–44).

The Salem trials have been well documented and have sparked numerous studies across academic fields. This thesis seeks to extend existing research by illustrating how petitioners used evaluative language to construct and present their arguments to the reader. Additionally, I will base my discussion on a manageable number of petitions. Therefore, this thesis serves as an exploratory study of evaluative language in Salem witch-trial petitions and does not seek to provide a comprehensive account. In this study, the goal is to identify and classify the evaluative tokens and thus examine how evaluative language was employed to express and reinforce the petitioners' shared attitudes toward the audience. I plan to answer the following research questions:

1. How are Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation deployed in the petitions? What is the distribution between positive and negative evaluations?
2. How do petition writers use evaluative language to build persuasive arguments across texts?

I suggest, as a hypothesis based on previous research, that references to the accused will feature more positive than negative evaluations. This hypothesis is grounded in the notion that these texts were used to appeal to the court to prove the accused's innocence and sense of character, and therefore the use of positive evaluation would prove to be more effective. I would also suggest that evaluations of the accused's personality and characteristics be brought more frequently to the forefront of the arguments to reassure the reader that the accused

possesses characteristics the Puritan community values, thereby drawing their attention to arguments focused on those characteristics.

This study is structured as follows: Chapter Two introduces the historical background of the witchcraft crisis in Europe and New England. The chapter also introduces petitions and explains them in more detail. In Chapter 3, I will be discussing the Appraisal Framework and its three main categories along with their sub-categories. Chapter 4 outlines the materials and methods before moving on to Chapter 5, where I will present a comprehensive discussion through my analysis of the domain of Attitude and the evaluative realizations identified in the data. Chapter 6 discusses the findings in more detail and considers the limitations of this study. I conclude my thesis by summarizing key findings and offer suggestions for future research on this topic.

2 Witch trials in early modern England and North America

In this chapter I will briefly introduce the course of order in early modern witch trials, the role of petitions in them and the relevance of the Salem Village episode. Section 2.1 is focused on the general history and development of witch trials in the European continent. In section 2.2, I will briefly talk about the importance of Salem Documents. Lastly, section 2.3 will focus on the genre of petitions and how they were used in the Salem Village witch trial proceedings in more detail.

2.1 The emergence of witchcraft, history and beliefs

This section traces the development of beliefs concerning witchcraft and the progression of associated trials in Europe and their move to North America. As Salem's trials were documented with keen interest and detail to the community's life, their research offers us a glimpse of the viewpoints of Puritans and their fight against satanic forces reported in their community. In order to provide basic understanding of the social and cultural climate of Salem and its witch trials, I will begin with the European background of witchcraft beliefs and practices and then move on to Salem.

What comes to the legacy of witch hunt and its trials, its roots can be traced back to the ancient times of Mesopotamia when it was already denounced as illegal and those who exercised it were to be punished by death (Goss 2008, 1). This belief was adopted by the Israelites and from them it was passed down to the early Christians who developed then the belief of Heaven and Hell, and those who sided with Hell and satanic powers were claimed as witches (Goss 2008, 2). However, in contrast to a belief that witchcraft and witches have always been seen as demons' associates and Satan's messengers, there had been also more lenient times. Before the Middle Ages and the rise of Catholic church, Europe had seen a period of acceptance and toleration of other religions beside Christianity and so-called heresy was not seen as a problem (see Thurston 2007). However, all this changed dramatically by the end of Middle Ages where there was a steadily increasing number of accusations made against individuals and occasionally groups (Goss 2008, 2). What also worked in the favor of making this possible was the rising number of new trends, such as the church deciding who was to be saved or not, the description of the purgatory and the notion of an enemy within, imagined or not (Thurston 2007, 60).

What has also been raised as one of the foundation stones to the rise of the witch hunt was the rising of misogyny and the declining status of women inside the society. Thurston (2007, 65) illustrates that almost up to 80 percent of the persecuted witches during the hunts were of female sex. However, while described as one of the reasons for the vast number of women being persecuted, there lies a difficulty in fully blaming misogyny for the reason of the witch hunts. The status of women has greatly varied throughout human history and before the witch trials commenced, women possessed a positive image as being closer to God and being the 'softer' sex (Thurston 2007, 66). It is not until the beginning of the 12th onwards that people, mostly men and those working for the Church, began to generate deep hatred against women and saw their soft characteristics as weaknesses against the temptations of the devil (ibid.). One of the most know publications from the late Middle Ages and one which promotes the negative image of the female sex and advice to torture them is the *Malleus Maleficarum*, also known as *The Hammer of Witches*, published in the late 15th century by two Dominican monks. Although initially branded as a book to vent out bitterness and 'revenge' against women, the *Malleus* offered the prosecutors a list of reasons why women should be suspected of witchcraft compared to men and how the procedures should take place (Thurston 2007, 103).

The witch trials progressively spread around the western Europe, but no clear patterns have emerged to explain why the witch hunts started first and foremost. Such explanations as falling standards of living, countless wars during the centuries leading to the start of the hunts have been offered as possible reasons yet they still do not offer exact evidence (Thurston 2007, 153). And while the Reformation of the 16th century evoked tensions inside Europe's Christian community, the persecution of fellow believers occurred inside all communities (ibid.) Having now the general understanding of the history of witchcraft, I will briefly discuss the significance of the Salem Village trials and how they have inspired a vast number of studies across academic fields in the next section.

2.2 The Salem Village Documents

The Salem Documents have offered opportunities for a vast number of studies across academic fields from several different perspectives. For such a minor episode of witch trials happening in the Salem Village of Massachusetts starting from the accusations made by two little girls in the winter of 1692, it has sparked the attention of researchers. While the episode lasted only for a year, the trials have gone down in history for being one of the most well-

documented episodes of the witchcraft crisis during the early modern period. By the vast amount of evidence and documents surviving to this day, the keen attention to following systematic, legal procedures has proven the accusation of the society being in grips of ‘hysteria’, in its better meaning, to be false as hysteric people would not behave in the way of producing detailed records of the trials (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 22). The numbers regarding these trials also speak for themselves; while the total number of accused varies from 150 to more than 200, around 50 people were found guilty and from this number, only up to 20 were executed by hanging (see Thurston 2007; see Rosenthal et al. 2009).

Several reasons for the witchcraft crisis in Salem Village have been laid out over the years. One of many interpretations suggests that the Puritan society, which landed to New England during the latter half of the 17th century, helped in order to brand ‘deviant’ females of the society as witches (Thurston 2007, 184). Other interpretations also offer disputes with the Indians and /or the people of Salem Town, the continental crisis affecting the colonies of the New World, and the uncertainty of the colony’s positions in 1691 – 92 (Thurston 2007, 185 – 191). Although we might never determine the exact reason for the episode, it can be said that the trials worked in order to rid the society of its so-called ‘unwanted and deviant’ women as most of the accused were involved in quarrels and complex arguments with the villagers (ibid.). And while these trials could also be dubbed as the purges of the ones unwanted, they have offered later generations records from where we can discuss the nature and purposes of the legal procedures.

Due to the documents functioning as records of legal proceedings, most recent studies have focused on the discourse features of the trials which include the study on scribal profiles and influence (Hiltunen and Peikola 2007), characteristics of petitions as a genre (Peikola 2012), and the analysis of speech acts in documents of examination (Hiltunen 1996), among other topics (Doty 2018, 21). For this thesis, one of the key inspirations for this thesis was research by Kathleen L. Doty focused on the narrative patterns within legal petitions offered during the trials that focus on attempts made by family members and friends of the accused to save their lives (Doty 2018, 22). In the next section, I will introduce the genre of petitions in more detail and their place in the legal procedures made during the Salem trials.

2.3 Petitions

The genre of petitions has existed since the medieval ages or even earlier as some early versions of petitions were presented from the subjects to the British Houses of Parliament for the sovereign to grant (*Oxford English Dictionary*; Historical Thesaurus). As the early modern English society excluded most people, usually those of common and lower birth or women, from institutions of power, petitioning offered these people opportunities to engage with those in power and address their opinions (Waddel & Peacey 2024, 4). However, to be accepted for consideration, petitions needed to comply with a standardized structure (Doty 2018, 25). In his study regarding characteristics of petitions, Matti Peikola describes petitions as legal documents explicitly identified as such by their authors or by the courts, containing formal written appeals from subordinates to superiors, expressed in respectful language (2012, 109).

The category of petitions is introduced by Grund et al. (2009, 68–69), amongst other text categories such as indictment, warrants and such, to follow strict set of rules that were to be followed while constructing them for the trials. Gudrun Held (2010) discusses the history of petitions in more detail in her study of petitions written during the medieval times in Italian and French. Her research demonstrates that petitions have a far-reaching history in Western history and legal traditions emphasizing that both the hierarchical relationship between a petitioner and authority figure, and the enduring rhetorical structure, which has been set into five stages deriving from classical rhetoric conventions, are the most evident features in the petitions (Held 2010, 197–200).

Petitions were part of the legal proceedings in the Salem Village trials and the legal process in the New England colony mostly followed its English counterpart in the Old Continent (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 44). Roughly explained step by step, the procedure commenced with the accused being arrested and given a preliminary hearing whereupon proven guilty, the accused would be attained and brought before a grand jury (Trask 2009, 45). If the grand jury determined the case was justified for a jury trial which was the last step (*ibid.*). At any point in these three legal steps, evidence could be brought forth in written form which were then incorporated together with the already existing documents (*ibid.*). However, not all evidence were drawn up beforehand as another type of material found in the surviving legal records consists of those given in person as in given during the trial and those unsworn that were

almost certainly introduced during the trial in support of the defendant as in petitions (Trask 2009, 53–54).

Regarding the nature of petitions being recorded for the trials, the question of the texts' authority rises. The narratives written from the Salem trials were mostly done by the scribes attained for the legal procedures as in the early colonial period in Massachusetts, the writing literacy was for those who needed it in their careers (Grund et al. 2009, 70). Therefore, the question arises how much of the petitions is originally from the petitioners and how much the scribes have influenced the final version given in the trials. In contrast to depositions which are written records of verbal evidence of witnesses reporting their experiences and a vast number of people wrote them thus a significant deal of variation existing, petitions provide examples of formulaic language in order to strengthen their legal force (Grund et al. 2009, 68–69). Therefore, it is important to consider these questions of scribal roles and the position of designated authors as they were part of a procedure to determine the outcome for the accused. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis is limited to providing only a preliminary overview of the topic and focusing further on it would shift the attention from petitions and their language to the work of the scribes and their profiles.

I have outlined the emergence of witchcraft in Europe and how it developed from superstitions to more grand scale trials: among them the episode of Salem Village of 1692 and 1693 providing researchers with one of most well-documented archives of the English-speaking world. The nature of petitions has also been discussed in order to understand how they were produced and what was their place in the legal proceedings of the trials. Next, I will to outline Appraisal Framework, which serves as the analytical approach of this thesis.

3 Appraisal Framework

In order to analyze evaluative meanings, this present study adopts Appraisal Framework as its primary analytical model. The framework was created by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White in the early 2000s. Section 3.1 discusses the first main category of Appraisal Framework, Attitude. Section 3.2 introduces the second main category, Engagement, while Section 3.3 addresses the final category, Graduation. Although all sub-categories within these main domains are briefly outlined, the primary focus of this thesis is on the sub-system of Attitude.

Appraisal Framework (AF) can be roughly described as a tool for identifying and analyzing the nuances of emotion and opinion in discourse. Therefore, AF is used not only to study what overt, but also what indirect means speakers and writers use to evaluate humans and things positively or negatively (Martin & White 2005, 2). Evaluative language employed in texts has been the interest of numerous studies in research fields, such as semantics and discourse studies. In their work *The Language Of Evaluation*, Martin and White (2005, 1) determine *evaluation* as the key term to study how speakers and writers construct their opinions and how they expect the listeners and readers to do it in the same manner. In other words, appraisal theory focuses on the language of evaluation, attitude, and emotion, as well as the resources that interpersonally position the propositions and meanings presented in the text (White 2015a). Several other parameters to study evaluative language exist alongside, but AF does not limit the realization of evaluation to specific grammatical categories therefore henceforth allowing for more wider research (Martin & White 2005, 10).

Appraisal Framework was developed in the 1990s as an extension of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) model, which was originally formulated by M. K. Halliday and his colleagues (Martin & White 2005, 1, 7). The SFL model offers analysts complementary perspectives for examining how language functions, viewing it as a means of representing ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings in communication (Martin & White 2005, 7). What these three meanings portray are the experience and interpretation of surrounding world (*ideational*), the relationships between individuals (*interpersonal*) and the combination of aforementioned aspects together in concrete ways to form coherent utterances and texts (*textual*) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, 30–31; Martin and White 2005, 7). However, the interpersonal domain is more advanced in AF as instead of only focusing on the notion of evaluative language being used to construct the world, Martin and White (2005) portray AF as

means to build relationships and uphold shared values within communities. At this point it is important to mention that while AF can be applied to written and spoken language alike, I will limit the focus to written instances of appraisal in this study.

Inside Appraisal Framework, appraisal can be divided into three main categories capable of interacting mutually: *Attitude*, *Engagement* and *Graduation* (Martin & White 2005, 35). Martin and White (2005, 39) voice their opinion that Attitude is the primary domain when Engagement and Graduation support it. They support this opinion on explaining the importance of emotions used both explicitly and implicitly in written and spoken utterances (Martin & White 2005, 40). Henceforth, Attitude deals with, for instance, emotions, opinions, and judgments expressed through utterances (Martin & White 2005, 35). The second main domain, Engagement, deals with how writers or speakers position themselves towards value positions, i.e. how writers or speakers distance themselves or side with alternative positions (Martin & White 2005, 37). The third and last main domain, Graduation is a tool to study the grade of evaluation, for instance how weak or strong it is (ibid.)

In choosing Appraisal Framework to be used as an analytical model, I decided to examine emotions and opinions the writers explicitly and implicitly use in their evaluative language to affect others. The sub-categories of Attitude, encompassing Judgment, Affect and Appreciation, allow for a systematic and detailed analysis focused on these. Therefore, Martin and White's systems of appraisal present me with tools to identify and analyze tokens of evaluation henceforth I will be using their 2005 book as a base frame when conducting my analysis. As mentioned earlier, my data will mainly be analyzed by the main domain of Attitude and its sub-categories shown in Figure 1 below.

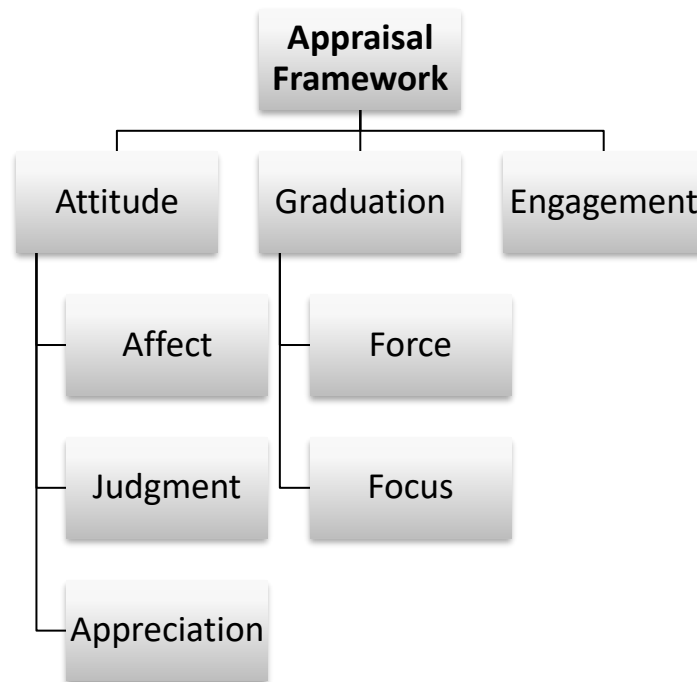


Figure 1 Martin and White’s 2005 Appraisal Framework and its main three categories (Martin & White 2005, 42 – 44, 92, 136–137)

3.1 Attitude

The first domain of appraisal, and the focal category of this thesis is concerned with feelings. Martin and White name this wide system as Attitude in their 2005 book, and it is considered the main category inside AF. As seen in Figure 1, Attitude is further subdivided into three sub-categories, which correspond to what are “traditionally referred to as emotion, ethics and aesthetics” (Martin & White 2005, 42). The first subcategory to be introduced is *Affect* which is concerned with emotion and it evaluates the degrees of positive and negative feelings as emotions are arguably at the center of human discourse (ibid.) The second category of *Judgment* deals with “ethics and attitudes towards behavior which we, for instance, admire or criticize” (Martin & White 2005, 42, 44). Lastly, the category of *Appreciation* refers to aesthetic evaluation, encompassing judgments and feelings of value directed towards objects, events, and natural phenomena (Martin & White 2005, 43, 45). I will offer examples of all these appraisals, which are explicitly underlined and taken from Martin and White’s 2005 book, until further notice.

Firstly, *Affect* deals with categories that are concerned with emotions. Martin and White further classify expressions of emotion into the categories of *quality*, *process* and *comment* (2005, 46). The following examples illustrate all these realizations:

- (1) The captain was sad (Martin & White 2005, 46)
- (2) The captain wept (Martin & White 2005, 46)
- (3) Sadly, he had to go (Martin & White 2005, 46)

Example 1 shows an example of realization of quality where an emotion describes a participant. Furthermore, the realization of quality can express emotions with a participant or describe the way a process is carried out (Martin & White 2005, 46). The appraisal in Example 2 describes one of two realizations of process, one where behavioral process is attributed by emotions the participant is feeling (Martin & White 2005, 46). In addition to behavioral process, the participant can also experience a mental process (ibid.). Lastly, Example 3 illustrates Affect as comment which encompasses those expressions that realize feelings of desire or longing (ibid.).

In order to classify emotions, AF has drawn classifications of *un/happiness*, *in/security*, and *dis/satisfaction* in Affect (Martin & White 2005, 49–51). Un/happiness is involved with emotions of happiness or sadness, love or hate which are the core of emotions experienced by human heart (Martin & White 2005, 49). In contrast to so-called core emotions, in/security relates to one's sense of social and environmental well-being, along with related feelings such as anxiety and confidence (Martin & White 2005, 49–50). The last category, dis/satisfaction concerns emotions that result from the fulfilment or blockage of goals, including feelings such as dis/pleasure or interest (Martin & White 2005, 50–51). Henceforth in my analysis I will be using these categories when classifying emotions of affective meaning. Following examples introduce these categories, and the category is underlined with explanation in brackets:

- (4) He felt sad/cheerful (un/happiness) (Martin & White 2005, 49)
- (5) He felt anxious/confident (in/security) (Martin & White 2005, 50)
- (6) He was fed up with/pleased (dis/satisfaction) (Martin & White 2005, 51)

The second domain of Attitude, Judgment, deals with items of evaluation of behavior (Martin & White 2005, 52). These elements reflect the writer or speaker's stance on social norms and expectations - on what behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable and are therefore further divided into judgements of social esteem and social sanction (Martin & White 2005, 43, 52). Judgments of esteem, also referred to as judgments of social esteem, deal with evaluations of people in 'normality' as in how unusual they are, 'capacity' as in how capable they are, and

‘tenacity’ as in the extent of their decisiveness (Martin & White 2005, 52). In addition, judgments of social sanction are divided into ‘veracity’, as in the degree of one’s truthfulness) and ‘propriety’ as in measuring how ethical someone is (ibid.) Following examples introduce these and the category is underlined with categorization in brackets:

- (7) It’s normal for him to be naughty. (normality) (Martin & White 2005, 55)
- (8) He’s strong enough to go. (capacity) (ibid.)
- (9) I’m resolved. (tenacity) (ibid.)
- (10) It’s true he’s naughty. (veracity) (Martin & White 2005, 54)
- (11) It’d be unfair for you to go. (propriety) (Martin & White 2005, 55)

Lastly, the domain of Appreciation is used to evaluate the value or quality of objects and events (Martin & White 2005, 56). Broadly speaking, the evaluations of Appreciation can be classified into ‘reactions’ to things as in “how they catch our attention” through their impact and quality, ‘composition’ as in how we perceive them through balance and complexity, and ‘valuation’ as into what degree we value them (ibid.). Similarly to the sub-category of Judgment, which is based on a community’s cultural norms and expectations, the sub-category of Appreciation is also context-bound, and what is considered valuable can vary between different fields or disciplines.

- (12) It was captivating/boring (“did it grab me?”: impact) (Martin & White 2005, 56)
- (13) It was beautiful/ugly (did I like it?”: quality) (ibid.)
- (14) It was balanced/unbalanced (“did it hang together?”: balance) (ibid.)
- (15) It was clear/unclear (“was it hard to follow?”: complexity) (ibid.)
- (16) It was penetrating/insignificant (“was it worthwhile?”: valuation) (ibid.)

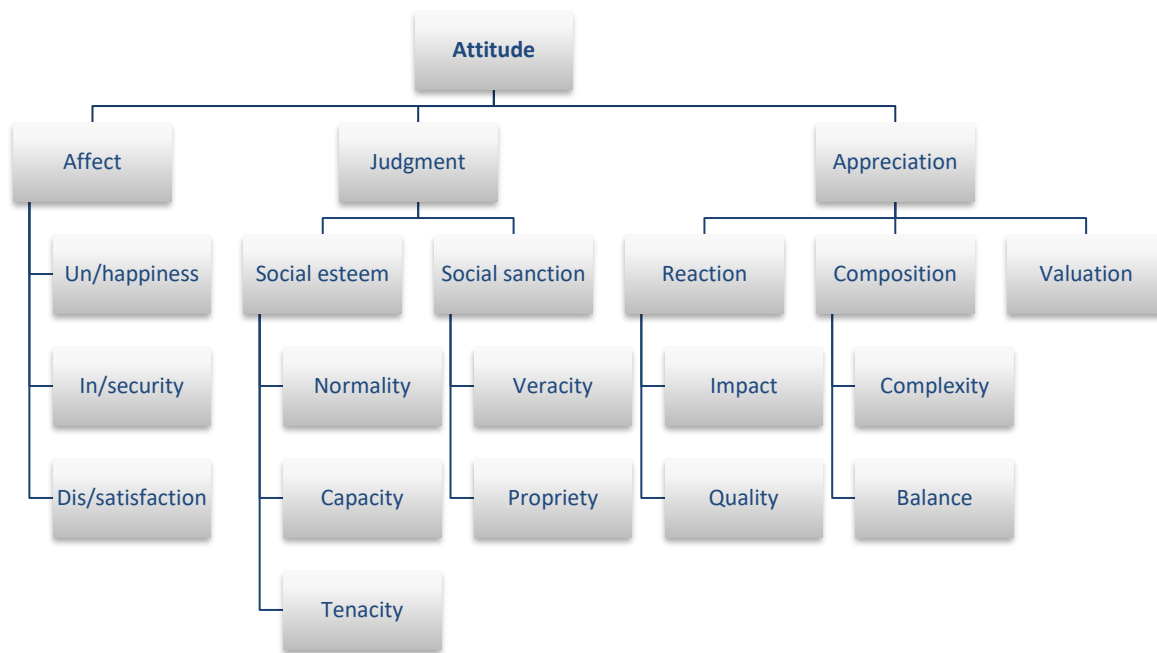


Figure 2 Subcategories of Attitude (Martin & White 2005)

This subsection has given a brief overview of all domains in the main category of Attitude that are relevant for this thesis. It should also be addressed that the examples presented here illustrate what Martin and White call *inscribed* attitude (2005, 64). Further discussed by White (2015a), inscribed appraisals are evaluations that are directly stated in the text and can be understood without prior knowledge of, for example cultural contexts or ideological perspectives. Alongside these direct appraisals, evaluation can also be conveyed indirectly. Indirect appraisals are interpreted by uncovering implied meanings in the text and can only be understood when familiar with their surrounding context. Martin and White refer to these indirect forms as *invoked* attitude (2005, 67, 79). This study will take into account both inscribed and invoked appraisals, thus marking inscribed as *explicit* and invoked as *implicit*.

3.2 Engagement

The next main category of appraisal developed by Martin and White is Engagement. It focuses on “the linguistic resources by which writers/speakers adopt a position towards to the value positions referenced by the text and with respect to those they address” (Martin & White 2005, 92). As discussed briefly, Engagement deals with the ways writers/speakers for instance negotiate opinions or viewpoints in communication (Martin & White 2005, 35, 37). Discussed by Martin and White, the category of Engagement is a complex system of resources which are used to describe the speaker or writer’s position towards the subject of

appraisal. These resources can be for instance quoting, an acknowledgement or a denial of a possibility, or affirming the appraisal (Martin & White 2005, 37). Furthermore, Engagement is divided into two subcategories: texts that do not offer alternative voices to the opinion and texts that acknowledge the possibility of differing viewpoints (Martin & White 2005, 99–100). Texts that do not recognize alternative stances towards the subject are called *monoglossic* whereas the texts that engage and recognize other stances are called *heteroglossic* (ibid.). The following examples illustrate these differences:

(17) The banks have been greedy. (Martin & White 2005, 100)

(18) The chairman of the consumers association has stated that the banks are being greedy. (Martin & White 2005, 100)

(19) In my view the banks have been greedy. (Martin & White 2005, 100)

Example 17 expresses a stance that does not offer any alternative voices therefore henceforth it is seen as single voiced. As the utterance does not voice any other voices, it is categorized as monoglossic. In comparison, examples 18 and 19 introduce explicitly one individual's opinion thus there is a possibility of another stance on the subject. Therefore, the possibility of another voice recognizes the utterances as heteroglossic. Additionally, Martin and White express in their 2005 book that these two categories can be divided into a number of subcategories which offers means to analyze the ways the writer's or speaker's position is described. However, these subcategories will not be utilized thus not further discussed as Engagement is not the focal point of this study as I analyze the Attitudinal items found in the petitions.

3.3 Graduation

Completing the set of three main domains is Graduation. Graduation is used to adjust the strength or intensity of evaluations, scaling meanings up or down to in order to make them more or less forceful, or precise (Martin & White 2005, 35, 137). Martin and White further discuss that items of other main systems, Attitude and Engagement, can be interpreted through Graduation as emotion and voice are all subject to scaling (2005, 135–136).

Graduation is divided into categories of *Force* and *Focus* (Martin & White 2005, 137; White 2015a.). As was done with the subcategories of Engagement, I will not discuss Graduation's categories in much greater detail therefore presenting a brief overview of them.

Force is concerned with indicating the intensity and quantity of an appraisal, thus divided into *intensification* and *quantification* (Martin & White 2005, 140–141). Intensification marks quality's degree of intensity in an evaluation, whereas Focus marks the quantity of evaluations (ibid.).

(20) It's quite possible that... (Martin & White 2005, 142)

In addition to evaluations concerning measures of number and mass, Martin and White discuss also the evaluations of the degree of extent which are divided into categories of time and space (2005, 151). However, as these subcategories are not the focal point I will move on to the second category of Graduation, Focus.

Focus focuses on adjusting the prototypicality or membership of an expression, either strengthening it as a clear instance of a category or weakening it by softening category boundaries (Martin & White 2005, 137). Aforementioned strengthening of an expression is termed to as *upscaling*, and softening termed as *downscaling* (Martin & White 2005, 138).

(21) a real father (Martin & White 2005, 138)

(22) it was an apology of sorts (Martin & White 2005, 138)

A sharpened Graduation of Focus is illustrated in Example (21) as in the father referred to scales to the idea of 'father' that is shared. The use of sharpening is especially used when the term is not attitudinal in-sense therefore it is given a positive assessment (Martin & White 2005, 138). However, there is a reverse side when sharpening an attitudinal item as in the so-called negative sharpening indicates maximal engagement and makes the reader agree with the given claims (ibid.). In comparison, softening a term as shown in Example (22) is more complex, for instance when there already exists a negative term, the authorial voice is weakened and when the term possesses a positive meaning, it puts the presenter and the recipient against each other thus finding the common ground is needed (Martin & White 2005, 139–140).

This section focused on presenting AF as it is used as the methodological tool for this thesis. As discussed above, I have also chosen not to discuss some parts of the whole framework as this thesis focuses on the main system of Attitude and its sub-categories of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. While both Engagement and Graduation are part of the framework, they are

not central to the goals of this study thus resulting in not being thoroughly analyzed in this study. Additionally, AF has been used only to handful of historical studies with most of the criticism aimed at the size of the framework. I will discuss these limitations more thoroughly in the next chapter as it focuses on my materials and methods.

4 Materials and methods

This chapter discusses my material and methods that I have employed for the analysis. Additionally, I will discuss the limitations which were brought forth in the last chapter. I will conclude this chapter by discussing how AF has been used previously in regard to historical linguistics.

4.1 Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt (RSWH)

I collected petitions for this thesis from a work that many researchers interested in the Salem trials have used, *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (2009). The book is the first to provide a comprehensive record of all surviving legal documents from the Salem Witch trials (see Rosenthal et al. 2009). It features manuscripts and documents from now-lost manuscripts, and these have been transcribed from the originals using editorial tools to establish a chronological order of the events and identify the authors behind the documents (Rosenthal 2009, 15). As Rosenthal notes, much has been written about the Salem trials, but the sole purpose of the book is to give the reader a more thorough narrative of the trials, not to determine the differences among researchers on the subject (ibid.).

The material for this thesis had to meet the following conditions: (i) the chosen texts had to be archived as petitions and (ii) the texts would be written in 1692. The limitation of the year refers to the condition as it was the height of the Salem witch trials, the petitions written during this year had the goal of saving one's own or another's life. The *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (henceforth *RSWH*) categorizes approximately 60 documents as petitions although majority of them were recorded in 1693 or later and were mostly used to clear family names or used for financial restitution of the victims' families (Grund et al. 2006, 65; Doty 2018, 25). In addition to these later petitions that were excluded, a few other texts were also omitted from the analysis. As my purpose is to analyze how evaluations of Affect were used by the petitioners to portray the accused, two documents do not qualify for this purpose (*RSWH* 2009: pages 674 and 700). These two documents deal with victims' families and the state of their own wellbeing therefore not directly linked to the goal of saving an accused's life. *RSWH* also contains four other documents which have also been omitted from the material (*RSWH* 2009: pages 349, 483–484, 533–534 and 534–536). Although these documents were written in the support of individual victims and signed by a number of residents in the village to, their contents differ from the other documents as while they fill the

criteria of providing evaluation of the accused and they implicitly request for a freedom for the victims’, they lack an explicit request for freedom which has been found in the other texts. Under this paragraph is Table 1 consisting of information on my materials.

Table 1 Primary source material; modelled after Peikola 2012

Number in RSWH	Pages	Title of the text	Date in 1692
319	399	Petition of William Milborne	June 25
340	413–414	Petition of Rebecca Nurse	June 28
433	486	Petition of John Proctor from Prison	July 23
596	620	Petition of Sarah Cloyce & Mary Esty	September 9
611	630–631	Petition of Rebecca Fox for Rebecca Jacobs	September 12
654	657–658	Petition of Mary Esty	September 15
655	658–659	Petition of Ann Pudeator	September 16
676	673–674	Petition of John Hale, Nicholas Noyes, Daniel Epps Jr., & John Emerson Jr. for Dorcas Hoar	September 21
694	687–688	Petition of John Osgood Sr., John Frye, John Marston, et al. for Their Wives & Daughters	October 12
696	690–691	Petition of Twenty-six Andover Men Concerning Townspeople Accused of Witchcraft	October 18
697	691–692	Petition of Thomas Hart for Elizabeth Hart	October 19
698	692–693	Petition of Nicolas Rice for Restitution for Sarah Rice	October 19
702	697–698	Petition of Ten Persons of Ipswich	October 26
703	698	Petition of Thomas Barrett for Martha Sparks	November 1
711	704–705	Petition of Abigail Faulkner Sr. for a Pardon	December 3
712	705–706	Petition of Rebecca Eames for a Pardon	December 5

714	707–708	Petition of John Osgood Sr. & Seven Other Andover Residents for the Accused	December 6
715	708–709	Petition of Rebecca Fox for Rebecca Jacobs	December 6
718	710–711	Petition of George Herrick	December 8

In this thesis, I have chosen not to consider the various forms of spelling that are apparent in the texts. At the time of the Salem documents, the English language was shifting towards the standard form it possesses in the present day however much variation was still happening at the end of the 17th century, both in England and its colonies (Grund et al. 2009, 65).

Additionally, many of the recorders in Salem lacked education resulting in the varying spelling inside the documents (ibid.). While it must be recognized that these variations would offer considerable study on their own or linked to this study, I have not analyzed these variations any more than to support the evaluative tokens found in the texts.

4.2 Methods

I chose AF as the analytical approach for its focus on Attitude, which makes it appropriate for close reading of texts in which evaluation is central, as is the case with petitions from Salem. Rather than relying on quantitative explanations or abstract categorization alone, AF offers tools for a qualitative, close reading approach that attends to how meaning is constructed in context, with respect to wording and rhetorical function. This approach allows for meticulous analysis that addresses the research questions of this thesis. Both direct and indirect appraisals of the material have been categorized based on my interpretation and with support from the Oxford English Dictionary Historical Thesaurus (OED) and secondary sources. Given that the dataset consists of only 19 texts and includes potentially subjective implicit evaluations, I have not aimed to conduct a comprehensive quantitative analysis.

I have examined my material using AF, as offered by Martin and White (2005), with a particular focus on the system of Attitude. Within AF, Attitude provides the primary interpretive perspective for examining evaluative language, encompassing the sub-categories of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation (Martin & White 2005, 42–44; White 2015a). By focusing on Attitude, I can explore how affective reactions, ethical evaluations, and aesthetic

assessments are linguistically realized in my data. This focus allows for a careful examination of how petitioners express positive and negative evaluations, while situating these evaluations within the theoretical model of appraisal.

As to the research questions, I address the first research question, how the subcategories of Attitude are used in the petitions and how positive and negative evaluations are distributed by comparing the frequency of instances across the subcategories of Affect, Judgment and Appreciation in the initial part of the analysis. This approach helps illustrate how evaluations are distributed within the data. In addition to this, to answer my second research question, “How do petition writers use evaluative language to build persuasive arguments across the texts? I have analyzed the Attitude in the texts. Conversely, it must be noted that my analysis of these texts is not all-encompassing as the other two main categories, Engagement and Graduation, were not analyzed thoroughly. Therefore, the analysis does not fully follow Martin and White’s model of AF.

4.2.1 The scope of Engagement and Graduation

As discussed shortly above, this study adopts a selective application of AF focusing primarily on the subcategories of Attitude. The main goal of this study is to analyze how petitions are used to construct innocence and credibility. These meanings are mostly realized through evaluations of Attitude, specifically through the subcategories of Judgment, Affect and Appreciation which discuss emotions, stance towards behavior and mental processes (see Martin & White 2005). By focusing on these subcategories, the analysis allows them to focus more on the core evaluative strategies through which the petitions articulate claims of victims or supporters and how they appeal to the authority.

The second main category of AF, Engagement deals with the use of multiple voices and their dialogic positioning in discourse (Martin & White 2005, 35). While Engagement is relevant to the texts under this study, especially in instances where the petitions refer to witnesses, authorities, or such, the primary focus of this thesis is on the evaluative construction of meaning rather than the negotiation of dialogic space. There are instances where the external voices are presented in the texts therefore, they shall be taken into account. However, a thorough analysis of Engagement will not be utilized beyond the scope of this study.

Additionally, the third domain of Graduation will not be utilized in this thesis. As discussed to Martin and White in their study of AF, Graduation deals with the grading of phenomena which can be applied to both instances of Attitude and Engagement (2005, 135–136). While the tools of Graduation play a significant role in studying the strengthening of evaluative instances, I will focus in this thesis on identifying the types and functions of evaluation rather than on their scalar modulation. As similarly noted with the category of Engagement, instances of Graduation are acknowledged when they are relevant to the study, however, not analyzed in to a thorough degree.

The decision to focus on Attitude in this thesis reflects theoretical and practical considerations. The study of Attitude provides the most prominent access to evaluations of emotion and opinion, which are the central focus of this study, whereas the relatively small dataset and the qualitative analysis of the texts require a more focused approach. Nevertheless, Engagement and Graduation are notably important components of the broader AF and would offer more in-depth research in the future.

4.2.2 Appraisal in historical analyses

In this subsection, I will briefly discuss how AF has been utilized in historical analyses. This thesis on the historical analysis of petitions draws inspiration from previous research applying AF to historical texts. One of the inspirations for this study was the master's thesis of Aurora Tervahauta where she studied evaluative language used by physicians in their argumentation (2025, 6). The aim in her thesis was to demonstrate how physicians employed evaluative language toward surgeons and fellow physicians in texts concerning the Surgeons' Bill of 1690 in order to argue for the rejection of the bill (*ibid.*). Her research inspired the present study, particularly in applying a similar analytical framework to evaluative language. However, this thesis adapts the methodology to a different research context and set of materials rather than seeking to replicate her work.

Carla Suhr has also applied AF in order to examine evaluative language in early modern witchcraft pamphlets from England. Suhr's study can be linked to this thesis through its selective application of AF, as she concentrates on evaluative language of Attitude in witch pamphlets (2012, 132). Suhr's findings on the pamphlets indicate that Judgment was the most frequently used category of Attitude, especially when the targets of evaluation were the morality and credibility of the witches (2012, 135–137). Suhr does not find these realizations

surprising, as the pamphlets focused on accusations of witchcraft and the listing of morally condemned actions performed by the accused (2012, 138). As we study texts with contrasting purposes within the genre of witch trial documents, the differences between our findings will be evident. At the same time, our studies share a common focus: the evaluators and their targets of evaluation. Additionally, Suhr's study offers important points of view that should be taken into account in my own analysis, not just a focus on the quantitative distribution between positive and negative evaluations.

As discussed above with the framework used to analyze evaluations of people and phenomena, AF has also been used to evaluate objects such as books. In her 2021 study on books written during Renaissance in England, Sirkku Ruokkeinen set out to investigate what kind of evaluative language early modern translators put forward in their work and how the attitudes they encouraged readers to adopt were realized linguistically (2021, 1). Ruokkeinen also tackles the challenging circumstances to use the appraisal framework on historical examples as she discusses the researchers opting not to use AF due to the model's size, rendering it cumbersome and allowing a higher degree of interpretative flexibility (2021, 5). However, she argues that these aforementioned reasons should not prevent us from using the AF as with the help of secondary sources, listing sources as of Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and Oxford English Dictionary Historical Thesaurus used in her own study to understand the surrounding context of the texts and cultures linked to them (*ibid.*).

Compared to this thesis, Ruokkeinen uses a larger corpus of texts and leans on a more quantitative analysis of her materials; therefore, our approaches to the AF somewhat differ. Additionally, whereas her study has not focused on all tokens of appraisal found in the texts, I have sought to identify all possible Attitudinal instances in petitions to argue the petitioners' claims. However, if the aim of my thesis were more quantitative, I would sharpen my focus when analyzing the primary source material.

This chapter focused on my primary source material and outlined methods used to categorize the evaluative language identified in the texts. I also explained the reasons for adopting a selective approach to AF used in this thesis. In addition, the analytical approach of this study was inspired by previous research that has addressed the complexity of AF and has influenced this study's approach to historical texts. The next chapter will present the analysis of the instances of Attitude found in the petitions.

5 Analysis

Chapter 5 discusses my findings drawn from a corpus of 19 petitions, with a primary emphasis on qualitative analysis. Close reading grants a detailed exploration of how meanings are created, particularly through attitudinal evaluations that reveal the petitioner's position. Quantitative results of the analysis play a supporting role to the qualitative analysis in helping to identify patterns in the texts. To understand these patterns, I will offer examples that illustrate key points of Attitude. In the examples, aspects of Engagement and Graduation are discussed when they appear clearly in the data. This combined approach allows for a clearer examination of how evaluative language is distributed and how frequently different types of evaluation appear in the petitions.

5.1 Quantitative results

I start with a quantitative analysis of attitudinal items, providing a structured account of their distribution across the data. These items are grouped according to the three sub-categories of Judgment, Affect, and Appreciation, allowing for a clear comparison of how different types of evaluation are employed. In addition, each item is classified based on its polarity. For clarity and focus, the specific targets of evaluation are not included in Table 2, with the emphasis on the frequency and type of attitudinal expressions themselves.

Table 2 Evaluations of Attitude regarding the petitions

	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
Positive	0	30	4
Negative	20	29	12
In total	20	59	16

Due to the limited scope of this study, the quantitative dataset remains relatively small; however, it still offers a useful glimpse into the distribution of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation across the material. The results indicate that Judgment evaluations are the most prominent, occurring 59 times, compared to 20 realizations of Affect and 16 of Appreciation, for a total of 95 instances of evaluative language. Although these figures cannot support broad generalizations, they provide an indicative pattern that complements the qualitative analysis by highlighting the relative emphasis placed on different types of attitudinal meaning.

As shown in Figure 3 below, I have marked six different targets in evaluations of Judgment, and the distribution of positive and negative evaluations. In AF, the term “target” refers to a person, group, action, or phenomenon that is being evaluated through attitudinal language (Martin & White, 2005, 59). Martin and White further argue that “the source and target of evaluation are also criterial” for appraisal analysis with Affect sourcing from conscious participants, Judgment targeting human behavior or character, and Appreciation targeting things, “whether being concrete or abstract, material or semiotic” (ibid.). Hang Su and Susan Hunston also argue for this in their study on appraisal analysis and discuss how attitudinal lexis and attitudinal together account for evaluation (2019, 368).

I start my quantitative analysis with appearances of Judgment values and discuss their targets because they appear most in the petitions. Mostly targeted in evaluations of Judgment was the category of Victims who were the ones being accused of witchcraft. They are evaluated in somewhat even proportions with 11 positive evaluations to 12 negative ones. The second largest group of the targets is Self with 13 positive evaluations to 5 negative evaluations. Here the use of ‘Self’ contributes to the person writing the petition. The most notable observation

from Figure 3 is the absence of positive evaluations of Judgments targeted at Accusers, compared with 8 negative Judgments shown in the data. However, given the context of the texts, it is no surprise that they were not evaluated positively in the eyes of the victims or the victims' supporters. The last groups of Court/Authorities, Family and Witnesses distribute 10 evaluations in total, with Court/Authorities evaluated positively 2 times and negatively for once whereas Family been evaluated negatively 3 times and Witnesses evaluated positively 4 times.

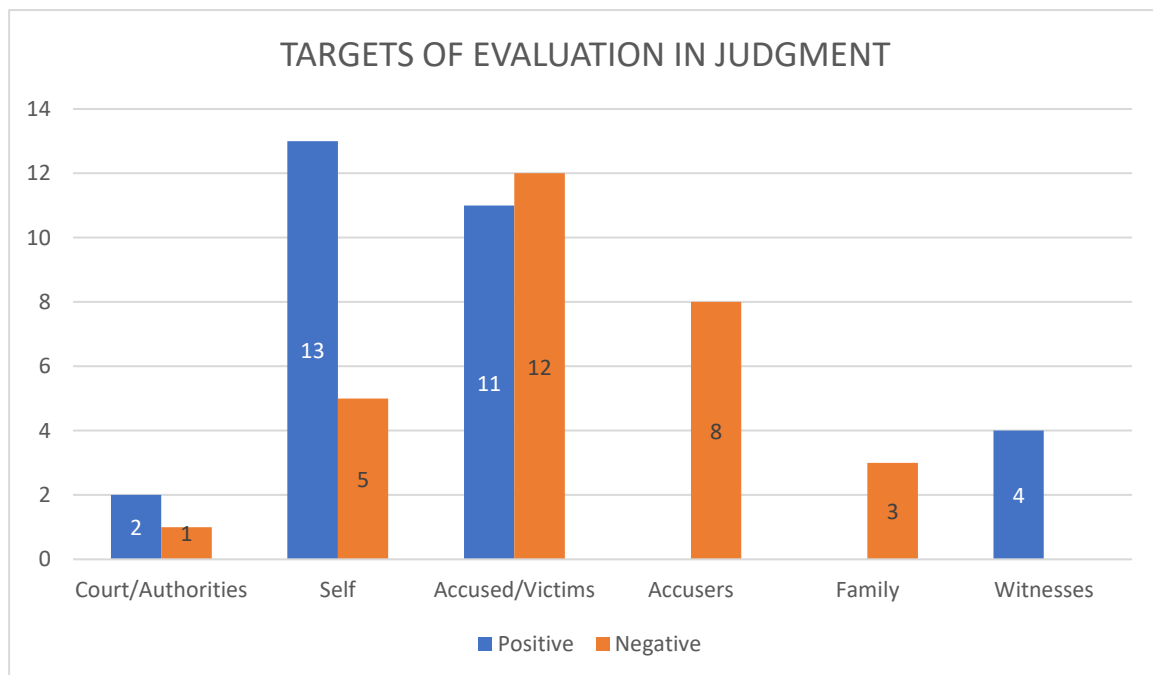


Figure 3 Targets of evaluation in Judgment

According to Table 2, the distribution of Affect and Appreciation shows that negative evaluations are used more often than positive ones. All 20 instances of Affect are negative, with no positive instances identified. This suggests a strong emphasis on the unfavorable emotional states experienced by the petitioners or victims. Findings of Appreciation follow a similar pattern, with 12 negative evaluations and 4 positive ones. Notably, instances of Appreciation are primarily directed at evidence and the court proceedings, indicating strong critical assessments of procedural or material elements. These two categories highlight the emotional distress and dissatisfaction with court proceedings as a background in the data. This will be discussed further in the qualitative analysis as I now move to examine the targets of evaluation of Judgment, Appreciation and Affect.

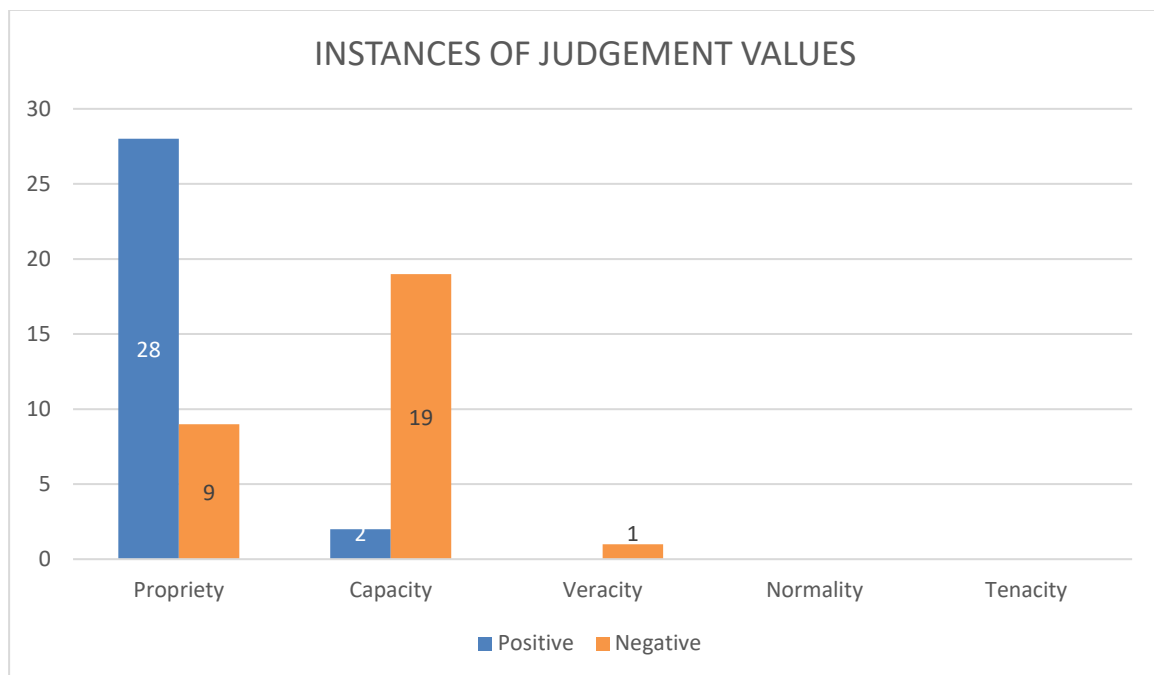


Figure 4 Instances in the subcategories of Judgment

As shown in Table 4 above, of the 59 instances of Judgment identified in the data, the majority fall within the category of social sanction, particularly propriety, which accounts for 37 occurrences, with 28 positive appraisals and 9 negative ones. The second most frequent category is social esteem, specifically capacity; however, it differs in the distribution of occurrences, with 2 positive appraisals and 19 negatives. A closer look at the occurrences shows that propriety is most often associated with positive evaluations, whether the target was petitioners themselves, victims, or the accusers. This suggests that the petitions place importance on morally approved behavior that readers are encouraged to agree with. In contrast, the category of social esteem, capacity, is more often expressed through negative evaluations that focus on the accused's perceived weaknesses or incapacities. Together, these patterns point to a strong focus on moral judgment alongside critical assessments of competence regarding the targets of evaluation. The last category of veracity appeared only once in the data, according to my analysis. Because no evaluations were identified in the categories of normality and tenacity, they are not discussed in the qualitative analysis; however, as they are part of AF, I have included them in Figure 4 above.

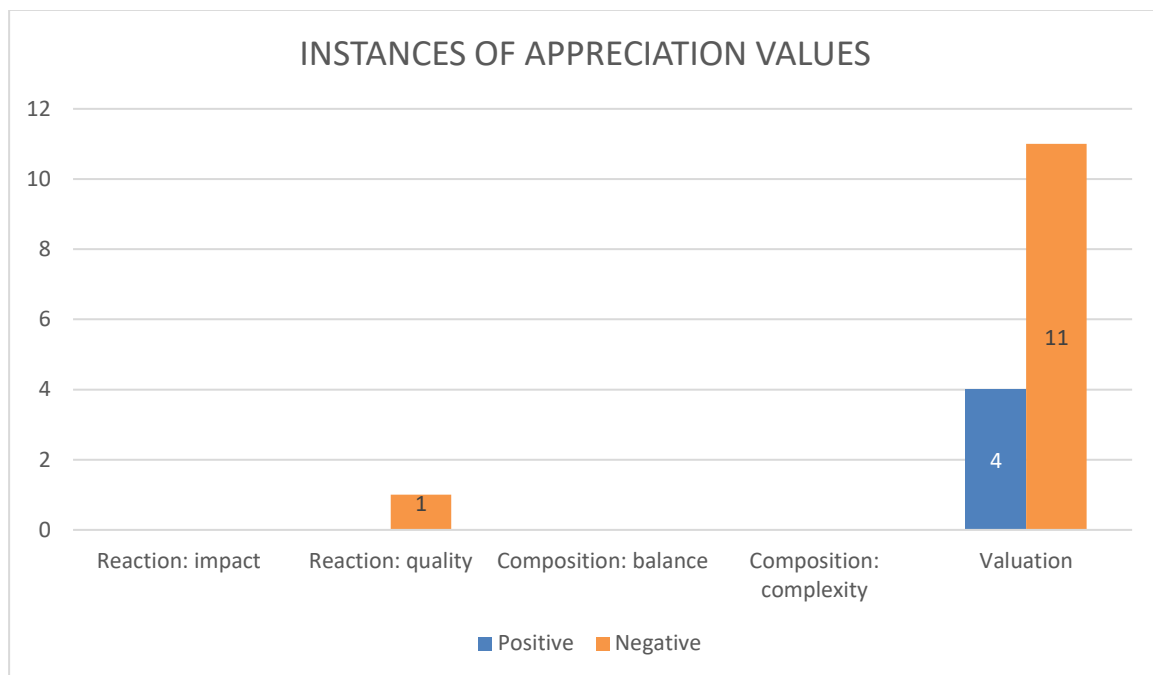


Figure 5 Instances in the subcategories of Appreciation

In Figure 5 above, the Appreciation subcategory was used the least of the Attitude subcategories. The domain of Appreciation involves evaluating things or phenomena, and its subcategories are Composition, Reaction, and Valuation (Martin & White 2005, 56). The first of the three subcategories, Composition, deals with the balance or complexity of things or phenomena, whereas the second category, Reaction, evaluates the impact and quality of things or phenomena, and lastly, the category of Valuation evaluates the authenticity of things or phenomena (ibid.). In the texts, there were 4 instances of positive Valuations opposed to 11 negative instances, and just with one negative instance of quality. No other sub-categories of Appreciation were analyzed in the texts therefore the sub-categories of impact, balance and complexity were omitted from this analysis and Figure 5 above. As discussed earlier, mostly evaluated were the evidence given to the trial and the legal system or process.

Lastly before the qualitative analysis, I discuss the instances of Affect appearing in the texts. Martin and White describe the domain of Affect dealing with emotions and emotional reactions and have divided it into three subcategories: un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction (2005, 49). Instances of un/happiness were not found in the texts therefore the category does not show any data in Figure 6 below. Additionally, because there were no positive evaluations of Affect in the texts, Figure 6 shows only the distribution of negative evaluations.

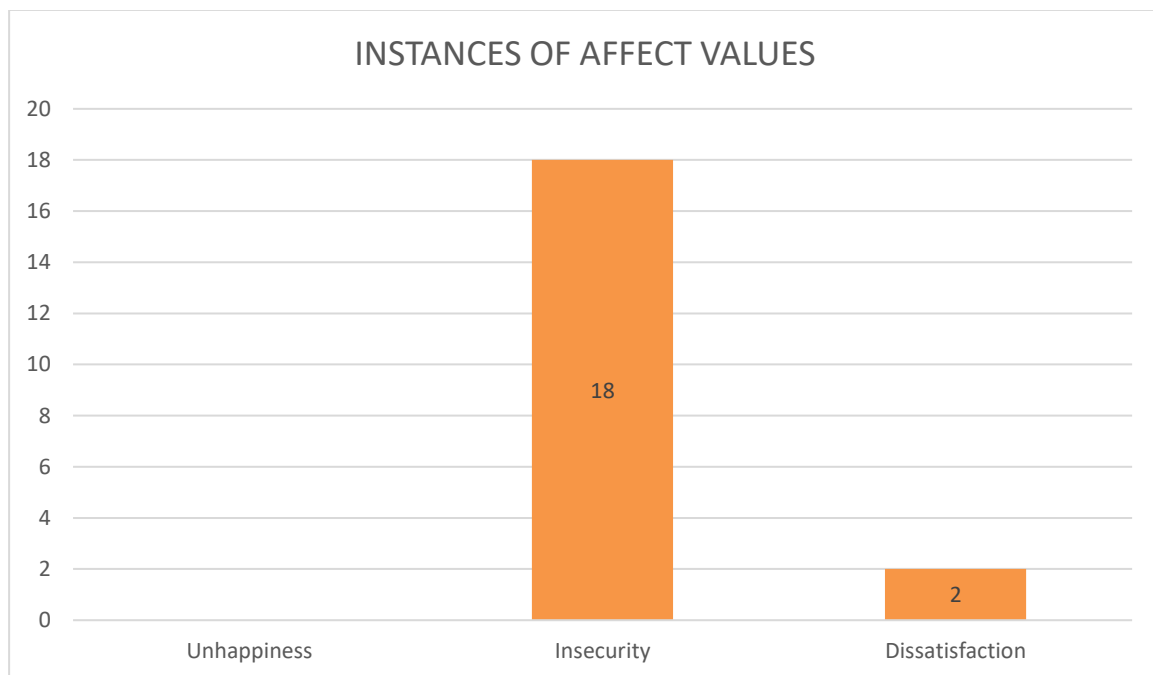


Figure 6 Instances in the subcategories of Affect

As can be seen in Figure 6, evaluations of insecurity and dissatisfaction were most often identified in the petitions. Of these two categories, insecurity was most common, with it being marked 18 times, whereas dissatisfaction was marked only twice. This suggests that the prominence of these categories was due to the writers' emotional contexts of fear and uncertainty. The petitioners' goal was to defend the accused and offer objections to the accusations through petitions; therefore, these actions would be conveyed through emotions of anxiety, distress, and doubt. Through these evaluations, writers expressed disapproval of the trials and attempted to persuade readers to side with them.

Having outlined the quantitative findings, the analysis now turns to a qualitative examination of Judgement, Appreciation and Affect, focusing on how evaluative language is used in the petitions. The discussion proceeds by addressing Judgement first, followed by Appreciation and then Affect. I will provide illustrative examples to support the analysis and my interpretations of the evaluative expressions.

5.2 Judgment

I start by discussing evaluative language found in the texts through the sub-category of Judgment, as it was realized most in comparison to Affect and Appreciation. The analysis will be conducted by providing examples from primary sources. In section 5.1, I introduced the

concept of targets and their meaning in AF. To make the examples easier to understand, I will introduce the target of the evaluation in each example under analysis. Whether the utterance is a positive or negative appraisal and expressed directly or indirectly will also be discussed. These parts of the analysis will also be applied when I discuss my findings on Affect and Appreciation. The use of authorial voice and scaling will be discussed briefly where they are shown straightforwardly, but will not be further analyzed, as discussed earlier in Chapter 4. It would also be good to consider the nature of the petitions and how they were constructed before commencing with the following sections. Discussed briefly in Chapter 4, petitions are formulaic legal documents; therefore, they are governed by a set of conventions and characteristics, as presented by Held in her 2010 study on petitions (2010, 197–200). This study's petitions also exhibit these characteristics, including phrases such as 'poor and humble petitioner', which should thus be taken into account when evaluating appraisals. The examples presented in the sections on Judgment, Affect, and Appreciation have been reproduced in accordance with the original texts. Therefore, punctuation and capitalization follow the source material. For clarity, evaluative expressions are underlined within the examples.

As discussed earlier in the quantitative analysis, appraisals of social esteem and social sanction were both distributed across the examples, with utterances marked with social sanction appearing more frequently. Therefore, I will start with the examples of a subcategory of social sanction. Most evaluations in this subcategory were aimed at the accused victims, and the evaluator was the petitioner themselves. In some cases, petitioners evaluated themselves as in these texts, the petitioners were usually the victims offered the opportunity to write a petition personally. Most of the evaluations aimed at the victims were positive whereas the evaluations of social sanction towards the accusers were negative.

(23) To your honors to Grant yt our wives and Relations being of such That have been approved as penitent Confessors. might be Returned home... (RSWH 694.)

(24) Severall of the women that are accused were members of this church in full Communion, and had obtained a good report, for their blameless conversation, and their walking as becometh women professing godliness. (RSWH 696.)

The sub-category of social sanction, propriety, was most frequently distributed with positive evaluations in the examples. As shown in Example (23), the instance of propriety depicts the victims' behavior as aligned with the shared characteristics of the Puritan community and uses evaluative language, such as "approved" and "penitent". According to the OED, "approved" has the meaning of a person or a thing to be shown with a complement as so according to the context (OED, s.v "approve;" v. 1.4.a.) whereas "penitent" shows a degree of positivity with the meaning of sincerely repenting sins (OED s.v "penitent," a. 1.a.). aligned with the word confessor referring to a person who aligns themselves with their faith and has been recognized by the church in their character (OED s.v "confessor," n. 2.a.). Identifying the evaluator or evaluators of this text is rather straightforward, as it is explicitly shown in the example to be the husbands and relatives of the accused. Example (24) also presents an explicit positive appraisal of the victims' ethical behavior in line with the community's moral qualities. The evaluator of the utterance is similarly explicit as in Example (23) as the petitioners themselves, being the worried townspeople.

The use of negative propriety was seen less often, with its main targets being the accusers, or, in some cases, the authority. As suggested earlier, these negative appraisals were used to challenge the accusers' moral character and legitimacy, and these can be seen in the following examples.

(25) [a]nd seeing plainly the wiles and subtilty of [^]{my} accusers by my selfe can not but... (RSWH 654.)

(26) [w]ith the Enmity of our Accusers and our Judges, and Jury, whom nothing but our Innocent Blood will serve their turn...(RSWH 433.)

In Example (25), the petitioner who also functions as the evaluator, employs an implicit negative appraisal through their choice of wording. They have used words such as "wiles" and "subtility" where the former is a word with the meaning of being a deceitful or cunning trick whereas the latter word describes craftiness of a person (OED s.v "wile," n. 1.a.; OED s.v "subtility," n. 1.a.). Since the implication in this utterance is that the accusers may be corrupt against the victims, I have categorized this utterance under the category of negative propriety. An instance of negative appraisal can be seen in Example (26) as well. The accusers and judges are constructed as biased rather than impartial towards the victims. According to the

OED, the word “enmity” refers to the characteristic feelings of an enemy (OED s.v “enmity,” n. 1.). Due to the surrounding context, the word used refers to the immorality of the judges and acts as rather direct critique of the impartiality of the case, I have categorized this under negative propriety.

The data included evaluations of social esteem, capacity, as the second most after propriety. Almost all appraisals of capacity were negative, with only 2 positive appraisals. In almost all cases of negative capacity the target was the accused and in some instances the targets were relatives or friends of the accused.

(27) [w]hereas Rebecah Jacobs (daughter of Your Humble Petitioner) has a long time, even many Months now lyen in Prison for Witchcraft, & is well known to be a Person Craz’d, Distracted & Broken in mind ... (RSWH 715.)

(28) [a]s will appeare at ye great day of Judgment (May it please yo Excellencye) my husband about fiue yeares agoe was taken wth fitts wch did uery much impaire his memory and understanding... (RSWH 711.)

As outlined in Chapter 3, the sub-category of capacity refers to evaluations of an individual’s ability to perform a given action. In contrast to propriety, which addresses moral behavior, capacity instead focuses on the competence demonstrated by the target (Martin and White 2005, 52). In both Examples (27) and (28), the petitioner uses negative appraisal explicitly, selecting terms that carry inherently negative connotations. In both cases, the targets of evaluation are described as having “gone mad”, which frames them as incapable of performing any meaningful actions. By stating such extreme incapacities, the petitioner tries to appeal to the reader through worry of how these people would, as in the victim in Example (27), be capable of committing acts of witchcraft. Example (28) in comparison highlights the state of the victims’ relatives by disrupting the social roles of the family.

Example (29) below is categorized under positive capacity as the targets of evaluation here are people in high respect inside the community, few of them having professions as midwives. They are evaluated with appraisals explicitly positive, with the notion of them being educated and learned. In Example (29) can also be seen the use of Engagement as they suggest using the external authority by acknowledging them in the text. The petitioner may have chosen to

use this in order to shift the responsibility towards the authorial opinions therefore making their claim on their credibility more profound towards the reader.

(29) [A]nd therefore Yo pettission Humbley prayes/ That yo Honous would be pleased to Admitt of sum other Women to Enquire Into this Great: Concerne, those that are Moast Graue wise and skillfull: Namely Ms: Higginson sen MsBuckstone Ms: Woodbery two of them Being Midwiues:... (RSWH 340.)

Lastly, I will introduce two examples in which overlapping between sub-categories of social esteem and social sanction can be analyzed. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, evaluations of appraisal can be somewhat difficult to categorize under one particular sub-category.

Therefore, some overlapping can be seen in the texts where two sub-categories were contained in an utterance. According to Martin and White (2005, 53), appraisals within the sub-categories of social esteem relate to “normality (‘how usual?’), capacity (‘how capable?’) and tenacity (‘how reliable?’) while those within social sanction concern veracity (‘how honest?’) and propriety (‘how is their moral behavior?’)”.

(30) [A]nd then one of the sd Women which is Known to be, the Moaste Antient skillfull prudent person of them all as to Any such Concerne:... (RSWH 340.)

(31) [b]ut the Contrary Shee lived wth him as a good faithfull dutifull wife and alwise had respect to the respect to the ordinances of God... (RSWH 698.)

In Example (30), the petitioner uses explicitly positive appraisals of the target, words such as “skillful” and “prudent”. According to the OED, the word “skillful” means “Having practical ability; possessing skill; expert...” (OED s.v. “skilful,” adj. & adv. 4.a.) whereas the word “prudent” has the meaning of a person showing forethought or being cautious according to the OED (OED s.v. “prudent,” adj. 1.). Example (30) combines multiple layers of positive Judgement, with primarily invoking appraisal of capacity referencing to the old age and experience of the target, while also drawing on tenacity secondly when implying the resoluteness of the target. Example (30) demonstrates also uses of Graduation as the stacking of positive evaluations close to each other intensifies the utterance as according to Martin and White (2005, 144). Therefore, by strengthening their appraisal, the petitioner seeks to steer the reader toward more positive view of what a highly credible individual has to say.

A similar stacking of evaluations can be seen in Example (31) where explicit appraisal of positive social esteem, tenacity as in “faithfull” and social sanction, propriety in “dutifull” is made to describe the target, wife of the petitioner and therefore the victim. However, while “faithfull” invokes the appraisal of tenacity, each element of the utterance aims to reinforce the victim’s moral standing as a wife who does not lack in her social role and embodies the ideal of how a Christian woman should live as a wife. Therefore, the petitioner tries to align the reader with the victim’s innocence by making the accusation of witchcraft appear incompatible with his wife’s moral behavior. Under this discussion, I have categorized this appraisal as propriety in total with slight invoked tenacity inside of it.

Thus far, I have concentrated on the appraisals of Judgment in my analysis. This section has discussed the ways in which the petitioners used the sub-categories of Judgment to construct the victims' moral legitimacy as a key resource. The petitioners also used evaluative language directed not only at people, but also at things and phenomena. These evaluations fall under the domain of Appreciation, and they will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 Appreciation

This section focuses on analyzing Appreciation values in the texts. Although Appreciation is less nuanced than Judgement, it still supports discussion of the reliability of the evidence produced in the trials. The quantitative analysis shows that the Valuation sub-category was the most frequently identified category in the petitions, with only one instance of the Quality category. Within Valuation, the distribution was skewed toward negative evaluations, as all appraisals focused on evaluating things or phenomena. The following examples demonstrate negative evaluations under the category of Valuation.

(32) [T]hat the Euidence of Jno Best Sen and Jno Best Jun and Samll Pickworth wch was giuen in against me in Court were all of them altogether false & [^]{untrue} and... (RSWF 655.)

(33) [h]auing had no Euidences against me but ye Spectre Euidences and my owne confession wch ye Lord aboue knowes was altogether false and untrue...
(RSWH 712.)

Martin and White argue that Appreciation focuses on our evaluations of things and natural phenomena (2005, 56). In Example (32), the petitioner offers an explicit negative evaluation of the accusers' claims, portraying them as false and using Graduation to intensify this judgment. Whereas in Example (33), the evaluation is more implicit, as spectral evidence is framed as unreliable and therefore not to be trusted when the reader assesses the victim's credibility. Across these instances, the petitioner consistently challenges the validity of the evidence, including the confession, which is presented as having been made under pressure as stated briefly in Example (33). Graduation is also used by petitioners in stacking to reinforce and amplify these evaluations for the reader, thereby reinforcing the reader's belief in their falsehood. For the reasons discussed above, I have categorized these under negative Valuation aimed at the accusers' evidence and a wrongful confession made by the victim under pressure.

(34) [o]f A contrary opinion from the Rest And did then Declare, that shee saw
Nothing In or Aboute yo Honos poare pettissione But what might Arise from A
naturall Cause: And I then Rendered the said persons a sufficient Knowne
Reason as to my selfe of the Moueing Cause Thereof:... (RSWH 340.)

(35) [{t]he Pastour and } [Hand 1] those of ye Towne & Church of Topsfield, who
are ready to say something which we beg [Hand 2] ^ {hope} [Hand 1] may be
looked upon, as very considerable in this matter;... (RSWH 596.)

Examples (34) and (35) above are categorized under positive appraisals of Valuation. In Example (34), the positivity of this utterance is implicit and depends on the context of the utterance as being sufficient is not inherently a good quality. However, in this case, the petitioner is arguing against the evidence collected by the accusers, as the context to this example is that of the appearance of a mysterious mark interpreted as the mark of the Devil. The petitioner does not explicitly deny their accusation but rather reinterprets the mark as something appearing with natural causation, thus appealing to the reader by establishing their reasoning as rational compared to the accusers' interpretation. In Example (35), the evaluative target is the words of the witnesses, therefore evaluating their evidential importance. As opposed to the words of accusers, the petitioner heeds the reader to also listen to the other people for their credibility in assuming whether the petitioner is at fault or not. The use of Graduation can also be seen in Example (25) as the petitioner uses it to intensify the perceived weight of the testimony.

Lastly, I will briefly discuss in Example (36) the instance of quality in which has appeared in the categorization. Example (36) realizes the evaluation of the outcomes of legal process as highly negative and socially damaging to the victims thus affecting their vulnerability in the opinion of the reader. The following Valuation of the justice system in is used also to critique the justice system to reinsure the reader of the unreliability and how this could affect the assessment of the victims.

(36) [A]woeful chain of consequences will undoubtedly follow besides the uncertaintie of ye exemption of any person from ye like accusation in ye said Province... (RSWH 319.)

This section focused on instances of Appreciation found in the texts. Although they are fewer on number than those of Judgment, they are still significant as they are used to challenging the evidence and reinforce the falsehood of them. I will now turn to discuss Affect.

5.4 Affect

This section presents a qualitative analysis of Affect, focusing on attitudinal targets and their polarity. It draws on Martin and White's model of categorization of Affect as un/happiness, dis/satisfaction and in/security (2005, 48–51). Additionally, the analysis aims to identify the individual who experiences the emotion in each instance.

Discussed previously in the analysis of quantitative data, appraisals of emotion do not appear as commonly as those of Judgment. Additionally, there were no positive appraisals of emotion included in the texts which would be justified with regard to the context of the texts as they were written in the fear of death or other lamentable punishments. Thus, there would be no reason to portray positive feelings considering the situations the victims were in. The distribution between the subcategories of *dis/satisfaction* and *in/security* drew heavily upon the subcategory of *in/security*. The appraisals of *un/happiness* were not distributed in the texts as noted previously in the quantitative analysis therefore there are no examples of this discussed in this section. I will analyze the instances where emotions of insecurity are articulated with the examples below.

(37) [a]nd if sd. specter testimonie pass for evidence have great grounds to fear that the Innocent will be condemned upon ———. (RSWH 319.)

(38)) [f]or there was some such as myselfe gone before and it would not be long before I should follow them weh did so amaze and affright me that I knew not what I said or did... (RSWH 712.)

In Examples (37) and (38) above a rather explicit use of insecurity is analyzed in both utterances. In both examples, participant or participants feeling the emotions are the authors of the texts, however in Example (37) participant is the whole community, whereas in Example (38) the victim, being the author, acts as the one feeling the emotion. The emotion of fear cannot in most cases be used by positive emotive reactions, thus I have categorized both of these examples under insecurity. A use of Graduation can also be seen in Example (37) as the author has chosen to amplify their fear by adding “great grounds”. According to Martin and White (2005), Graduation has the purpose to either intensify or scale the evaluation. While these functions are not analyzed systematically, I have discussed earlier that instances of Graduation shall be mentioned when they are explicit in the examples. In Example (38) the petitioner has chosen to use the intensifying factor of Force to alarm the receivers of the situation the victims are experiencing therefore urging for action to save them. Most other instances of insecurity were linked to the feelings of fear and despair which seems to have been the way to emphasize the pressure felt by the victims on the ground of their innocence. The next example will introduce an instance where an evaluation of dissatisfaction was made.

(39) The Magistrates, Ministers, Jewries, and all the People in general, being so much intraged and incensed against us by the Delusion of the Devil,... (RSWH 433.)

Only two instances of dissatisfaction were found and both of them appear in the same text. I have decided to analyze these two separately: while appearing in the same text and almost one after another, they exist in two separate sentences with context between them. Therefore, I have categorized them separately. Both instances show explicit evaluative language, as in Example (39) words such as “intraged” and “incensed”. Example (39) also shows a distinct feature of Affect compared to the domains of Judgement and Appreciation. Whereas in Judgement and Appreciation, people and things are evaluated according to their quality. However, within the case of Affect, the attitudinal meaning may be inferred from both the participant feeling the emotion and its trigger or cause. In Example (39) the underlying

emotion of the evaluation is hate. Hate is a very strong negative emotion but in the context of the text, it has been upgraded to a very strong form of it by using Graduation of Force in 'so much' to amplify the emotions the accusers are feeling towards the victims. The explicit use of dissatisfaction targeting the accusers and authorities may be used to question the grounds on why the aforementioned people are against the victims therefore the quality of their accusations should also be questioned if they only rely on the emotions of hate.

Examples have shown how evaluative resources are used to construct persuasive arguments in support of the accused. All sub-categories of Attitude: Judgment, Appreciation, and Affect, have been analyzed to identify the strategies employed by petitioners. The discussion has highlighted how language is used to express stance and guide readers' evaluative perspectives. I will now move on to chapter 6 which will address the research questions and findings in greater detail.

6 Results and discussion

In the earlier chapter, I have introduced my findings on my material. I further explained them in more detail with different examples in order to highlight the findings and my interpretations on how petitioners use evaluative language in their texts to appeal to the readers and construct claims of innocence and credibility. The first objective was to identify the types of evaluative language employed, focusing on the categories of Judgment, Appreciation and Affect, and how people and phenomena are evaluated through them. The results of this thesis show that Judgment was most often used in petitions, focusing on evaluating people's morality and credibility. Within Judgment, propriety, the sub-category of social sanction, was most frequently used with 28 positive and 9 negative instances. The second most common category was the category of social esteem, capacity which includes 19 negative and 2 positive evaluations used.

At the introduction to this thesis, I presented two research questions. The first question analyzes evaluative instances and the distribution hypothesis, which initially addresses the notion that opinions are evaluated more frequently than emotions. The second question examines how evaluative tools were used to construct persuasive arguments. The analysis of this study supports the hypothesis that evaluative expressions linked to judging people's morals and ethics are used more frequently than expressions of emotion. In particular, categories of Judgment, social esteem, and social sanction are more prominent than Affect, confirming the expected distribution in the data. These choices were most likely with the need to appeal to the receivers and portray the victims as members of the shared community and characteristics therefore evaluating their ethics good was used in order to construct their innocence and credibility. Additionally, positive evaluations were mostly made when the target of the evaluation was the victim, mostly discussed by the petitioners or being petitioners themselves. The accusers or the evidence given by the accusers were also evaluated more negatively as could be linked to the nature of the texts.

The second objective of the study was to examine how evaluative resources are employed to construct persuasive arguments directed at the audience. In order to reach this goal, I examined the distribution of Attitude across the texts. It was concluded then that when victims were the targets of evaluation, Judgment acted primarily to construct and defend moral innocence. In the petitions, the authors repeatedly draw on positive evaluations of

Judgment to construct themselves or the accused morally upright, “good Christians”, thereby positioning them as incompatible with the charge of witchcraft. At the same time, negative Judgment was often implicitly or explicitly directed toward accusers, witnesses or judicial procedure, framing their actions as unjust or biased. This evaluative distribution is not incidental but reflects the institutional context of the trials, in which formal legal proof was uncertain and contested, and moral reputation functioned as a key form of evidence. In comparison, Affect and Appreciation were used less frequently due to the primary rhetorical goal of these texts is not simply to express emotion or describe conditions. Affect appears in references to suffering and urgency; however, it is typically supporting the persuasive arguments rather than being the argument. Similarly, Appreciation was used mainly in relation to prison conditions or the reliability of evidence, not constructing evaluation on human behavior. While Affect and Appreciation were used as strategic arguments in regard to Judgment, they also functioned as tools to support petitioners’ arguments. Judgment was used as the basis for the arguments where petitioners negotiated legitimacy and constructed credibility.

Previous research on petition writing generally describes petitions as highly formulaic texts that rely on set expressions of politeness and deference towards authority, as discussed by Held (2010, 197). These features could be seen in the petitions under study as they adopt a highly formalized style by positioning petitioners as humble subordinates to higher authorities. At the same time, the petitioners highlighted through the domain of Judgment the morality and credibility of the victims through repeated appeals to good reputation and Christian conduct, while at the same time diminishing the accusers and the evidence brought up by them. The petitioners also discuss the emotions experienced by the distraught victims for the receivers take them into consideration with more haste. While the petitions were formulaic documents and composed primarily by recorders who appear to have been familiar with conventions appropriate to petitions (Grund et al. 2009, 69), the petitioners still made the decision to use them, despite the fear of being accused of witchcraft, while defending the already condemned individuals. This would suggest that what petitioners intended to express to the receivers was that while evidence was brought forth on the possible acts of witchcraft and they could not voice their opinions due to society’s norms, the evidence should be taken into careful consideration and determine the victims as honest and formidable people of the

community and the petitioners were not afraid to show their support for the sake of their friends or families' salvation.

The results of this thesis align with those discussed by Ruokkeinen (2021) and Suhr (2012) in their studies of AF in books and witchcraft pamphlets. Both Ruokkeinen and Suhr found that the domain of Judgment was used more than the domains of Affect and Appreciation on the targets of evaluation. Ruokkeinen's findings support the results of this thesis, as her study similarly identified Judgment as the most frequently used evaluative category. While Ruokkeinen's study focused on evaluative language in books and the features that made them "good," the prominent use of Judgment suggests that the category is used when evaluation is tied to broader societal values. In petitions, a comparable use of Judgment can be seen, as petitioners used it to evaluate the accused on the basis of innocence and good reputation. Thus, despite our research differing in genre and subject matter, both studies suggest that Judgment can serve as a linguistic resource for constructing legitimacy and social impact.

This thesis shares similarities with findings from Suhr's 2012 study as well. Both studies showed that Judgment was the most frequently used Attitude category, especially in discussions of human morality and credibility. Both also yielded similar findings regarding Affect and Appreciation in the texts. However, in the case of Appreciation, Suhr (2012, 138) found that positive Appreciation was used to support the credibility of the alleged acts of witchcraft, whereas my findings summarized the use of negative Appreciation to oppose these accusations. Similarly, with Judgment, negative Judgment was more directed toward the accused for their socially unapproved acts of violence, in contrast to positive Judgment reserved for accusers (2012, 137–138). As I have discussed earlier, these differences would be evident because of the contrasting purposes: witch pamphlets were designed to reinforce belief in accusations of witchcraft, while petitions sought to defend accused persons and question the evidence provided by accusers. However, in light of the earlier discussion on our findings, I would suggest that these texts produced in the context of witchcraft relied on moral evaluation in their argumentation, as both of our source materials show.

7 Conclusions

This thesis has examined the evaluative language present in petitions from the Salem witch trials of 1692. The aim of the study was to explore the types of evaluative language used by petitioners and to analyze the distribution of positive and negative evaluations across the petitions. Additionally, this thesis examined how evaluative language was used to construct persuasive arguments in the defense of the accused. The study was conducted by analyzing 19 petitions submitted in 1692. What prompted this thesis to be conducted was the linguistic interest in the well-documented Salem witch trials as a significant opportunity to examine the emotive expressions and opinions constructed in the petitions. The study was conducted using Appraisal Framework created by Martin and White in the early 2000s, with a primary focus primarily on the main domain of Attitude. The analysis examined the distribution of Judgment, Appreciation, and Affect in the texts and identified the targets of these evaluations. For the purpose of this study, the analysis was conducted with a selective approach on the framework; therefore, the two main domains of Engagement and Graduation were not systematically analyzed. However, they were partly discussed in the analysis of examples in order to show that these domains could also be realized in the texts.

My analysis showed that evaluative language is evident in the petitions, with the domain of Judgment used most when evaluating the target, whereas the domains of Affect and Appreciation were less common. It was determined that the characteristics involved with the categories of social esteem and social sanction were used to appraise the victims or the accusers in the petitions, with more positive evaluations of Judgment towards victims compared to more negative evaluations towards the accused. The results show that the victims were evaluated as proper and dutiful, whereas the accusers and their evidence were criticized for their hateful and false nature.

This study has several limitations relating to both the data and analytical approach. I collected the material with feasible restrictions and narrowed it down to 19 petitions from year 1692. While this allows for a detailed analysis, it inevitably limits the scope of the findings. The selected texts explicitly labelled as “petitions” further narrow the data collection, excluding other relevant documents that may exhibit similar defensive or evaluative strategies. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized beyond this specific set of texts and should instead be understood as illustrative of evaluative patterns within this time and particular genre.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the analysis was conducted using AF. This requires close interpretative reading and is methodologically complex. In this study, I applied the framework selectively, with focusing on Attitude rather than Engagement and Graduation. This enabled for a detailed analysis; however, it also introduces the problem of subjectivity. What this means is that the identification and categorization relied on my interpretation of the texts. This has been recognized as a limitation of research based on AF, particularly in the study of historical texts, where the full socio-cultural and linguistic context cannot always be reconstructed with certainty. Additionally, I chose not to systematically analyze Engagement and Graduation to maintain the analytical focus of this study, which was on the evaluative language of Attitude. This meant that certain aspects of interpersonal meaning were not fully understood; therefore, a more thorough application of AF might yield further insights into the arguments at work in these texts.

In conclusion, this study has examined the use of evaluative language in the petitions of the Salem witch trials to argue for the accused's moral innocence and credibility and against accusations from the accusers. By applying AF to these historical petitions, I aimed to demonstrate on the notion of how meaning is negotiated in contexts of fear and uncertainty. The findings of this study contribute to a nuanced understanding of petitions used in the early modern period and highlight the importance of evaluation as a key element in both language and social interaction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Finnish summary

Johdanto

Tässä tutkielmassa tutkitaan arvioivan kielen käyttöä 19 anomuksen teksteissä, jotka liittyvät Salemissa vuonna 1692 käytyihin noitaoikeudenkäynteihin. Tutkimus keskittyy erityisesti siihen, millaisia arvioivan kielen keinoja anojat käyttävät teksteissään, kun noitavainot olivat kiihkeimmillään Salemissa. Historiallisten noitavainojen laaja dokumentaatio sekä Uudessa että Vanhassa Englannissa on säilynyt nykypäivään saakka, mikä on tarjonnut runsaasti aineistoa aihepiirin tutkimukseen ja innoittanut lukuisia tutkijoita (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 44). Vaikka tapahtumat alkoivat yksittäisistä valituksista, jotka koskivat muutamia syytettyjä, ne laajenivat nopeasti laajamittaiseksi syytös- ja pelkokierteeksi, jota on myöhemmin kuvattu joukkohysteriaksi. Populaarikulttuurin esityksistä poiketen tapahtumien aikana teloitettiin ainoastaan 19 henkilöä, ja osa syytetyistä vapautettiin (ks. Thurston 2007). Salemissa käydyt noitaoikeudenkäynnit muodostavat hyvin dokumentoidun ja yhteiskuntahistoriallisesti merkittävän kokonaisuuden, mikä tekee niiden tieteellisestä tarkastelusta perusteltua.

Käytin tämän tutkimuksen aineistona 19 anomusta vuoden 1692 ajalta. Tutkimusaineisto on kokonaisuudessaan koottu *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (RSWH) -teokseen, joka pyrkii esittämään kokonaisen narratiivin Salemin noitaoikeudenkäyntien tapahtumista vuosina 1692–1693 (Rosenthal 2009, 15). Tutkielmassa analysoidaan anojien kielellisiä valintoja ja tarkastellaan erityisesti sitä, miten he määrittelivät syytettyjä ja syyttäjiä. Arvioivan kielen analyysissä hyödynnetään Appraisal-teoriaa, joka tarkastelee kielellisiä keinoja asenteiden, arvioiden ja vuorovaikutteisen merkityksen rakentumisessa. Vaikka Salemin noitaoikeudenkäyntejä on tutkittu laajasti erityisesti kulttuurihistoriallisesta näkökulmasta (esim. Rosenthal et al. 2009), näiden anomustekstien arvottavan kielen systemaattinen lingvistinen analyysi on jäänyt vähäiseksi.

Tutkielmani tavoitteena on selvittää, missä määrin ja millä tavoin anojat käyttävät positiivista ja negatiivista arvioivaa kieltä asenteidensa ilmaisemiseksi AF-teoriaa soveltaen. Esitän tutkimuksen hypoteesiksi, että anomuksissa käytetään argumentoinnin hyväksi uhrien nuhteettomuuteen viittaavia arviointeja, ja heitä pyritään esittämään lukijoille myötämielisemmin kuin syyttäjiä.

Noituusilmiön historia ja Salemin dokumentit

Noitavainojen juuret ulottuvat muinaiseen Mesopotamiaan, josta uskomukset siirtyivät varhaiskristillisyyteen ja kehittyivät käsityksiksi noituudesta saatanallisena toimintana (Goss 2008, 1–2). Vaikka suhtautuminen noituuteen on vaihdellut historiassa, keskiajan loppua kohden syytökset lisääntyivät merkittävästi. Yksi keskeinen selitysmalli on naisten aseman heikkeneminen, sillä valtaosa syytetyistä oli naisia, vaikka ilmiötä ei voida selittää yksinomaan naisvihalla (Thurston 2007, 65–66). Noitaoikeudenkäyntien leviämiseksi Länsi-Euroopassa ei ole yhtä yksiselitteistä syytä, mutta esimerkiksi yhteiskunnalliset kriisit ja uskonnolliset jännitteet ovat voineet vaikuttaa ilmiön taustalla (Thurston 2007, 153).

Salemin noitaoikeudenkäynnit ovat yksi varhaismodernin ajan parhaiten dokumentoiduista noitakriiseistä. Säilynyt aineisto osoittaa, että oikeudenkäynnit perustuivat systemaattisiin menettelyihin, mikä haastaa käsityksen pelkästä hysteriasta (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 22). Syytetyjä oli arviolta 150–200, joista noin 20 teloitettiin (Thurston 2007; Rosenthal et al. 2009). Kriisin syiksi on esitetty muun muassa puritaanisen yhteisön sisäisiä jännitteitä, siirtokunnan epävarmaa asemaa sekä paikallisia konflikteja (Thurston 2007, 184–191). Näiden oikeudenkäyntien viimeaikaiset tutkimukset ovat keskittyneet erityisesti oikeudenkäyntien diskurssiin, esimerkiksi kirjurikäytäntöihin ja niiden vaikutukseen (Hiltunen & Peikola 2007), anomusten genren piirteisiin (Peikola 2012) sekä kuulustelujen puheaktien analyysiin (Hiltunen 1996).

Anomukset

Anomusten tekstilajin historian katsotaan ulottuvan keskiajalle tai jopa antiikin aikaan (Held 2010). Suurin osa väestöstä varhaismodernin ajan Englannissa, varsinkin alempiin yhteiskuntaluokkiin kuuluvat ja naiset, suljettiin valtaa käyttävien tahojen ulkopuolelle. Tämän seurauksena anomukset tarjosivat heille mahdollisuuden saada yhteyden vallanpitäjiin ja tuoda esiin omia näkemyksiään (Waddel & Peacey 2024, 4; Held 2010, 197–200). Gudrun Held kuvaa seuraavasti anomusten rakennetta ja luonnetta, jotka ovat säilyneet varsin vakiintuneina länsimaisessa oikeudellisessa perinteessä: niissä esiintyy nöyrä anojahahmo, joka pyytää ylempiarvoiselta auktoriteetilta suosiota tai armahdusta, sekä antiikin retoriikasta periytyvä viisiosainen rakenne (2010, 197–200). Jotta anomus otettaisiin käsittelyyn, sen tuli noudattaa tätä vakiintunutta rakennetta, jonka perusteella tuomioistuimet tunnistivat sen oikeudelliseksi asiakirjaksi: muodolliseksi, kirjalliseksi vetoomukseksi, jossa alemmassa

asemassa oleva anoo kunnioittavaan sävyyn ylemmältä auktoriteetilta (Doty 2018, 25; Peikola 2012, 109).

Anomukset olivat osa Salemin oikeudenkäyntejä, ja Uuden-Englannin siirtokunnan oikeusprosessi seurasi pitkälti Englannin oikeusprosessiin liittyvää mallia (Rosenthal et al. 2009, 44). Yksinkertaistettuna prosessi alkoi syytetyn pidätyksellä ja alustavalla kuulustelulla, joka jälkeen syylliseksi todettu henkilö vangittiin ja vietiin suuren valamiehистön eteen (Trask 2009, 45). Mikäli suuri valamiehистö katsoi asian riittäväksi, se eteni varsinaiseen oikeudenkäyntiin, joka oli prosessin viimeinen vaihe (ibid.). Näiden kolmen vaiheen aikana voitiin esittää kirjallista todistusaineistoa, joka liitettiin olemassa oleviin asiakirjoihin (ibid.). Kaikkea todistusaineistoa ei kuitenkaan laadittu etukäteen, sillä säilyneisiin oikeudellisiin asiakirjoihin kuulu myös suullisesti oikeudenkäynnissä esitettyä aineistoa sekä valaehdottomia lausuntoja, joita esitettiin lähes varmasti oikeudenkäynnin aikana syytettyjen puolustukseksi, esimerkiksi anomusten muodossa (Trask 2009, 53–54).

Anomusten asemaan oikeudenkäyntiaineistona liittyy myös kysymys tekstien auktoriteetista. Salemissa laaditut tekstit kirjoitettiin pääosin oikeudenkäynteihin määrättyjen kirjurien toimesta, sillä varhaisessa siirtokunta-ajan Massachusettsissa kirjoitustaito oli tyypillisesti sidoksissa tiettyihin ammatteihin (Grund et al. 2009, 70). Toisin kuin depositiot eli todistajien suulliseen kertomukseen perustuvat kirjalliset lausunnot, jotka on kirjoittanut suuri joukko ihmisiä ja joissa esiintyy huomattavaa vaihtelua, anomukset noudattavat usein kaavamaisempaa kieltä vahvistaakseen oikeudellista painoarvoaan (Grund et al. 2009, 68–69).

Tutkimuksen viitekehys

Olen käyttänyt aineiston analyysissä *Appraisal Framework* -teoriaa. AF-teoria on systeemifunktionaalisen kielitieteen viitekehys, joka tarkastelee kielen interpersonaalisia ja arvioivia merkityksiä (Martin & White 2005, 1, 7). Teoria jakautuu kolmeen pääjärjestelmään: Attitude, Engagement ja Graduation. Näistä Attitude käsittelee asennoitumista ja arviointia, Engagement tarkastelee eri äänien ja näkökulmien dialogista suhdetta sekä sitä, miten kirjoittaja asemoituu suhteessa esitettyihin väitteisiin, ja Graduation puolestaan kuvaa arvioiden asteittaisuutta, voimistamista ja kategorioiden tarkkuuden säätelyä (Martin & White 2005, 35).

Tutkimuksen analyysissä keskitytään erityisesti Attitude-pääjärjestelmään, joka jakautuu kolmeen alakategoriaan: tunteiden ja tunteikkaiden reaktioiden ilmaisun affektiin (affect), ihmisten toiminnan ja käyttäytymisen arvioinnin tuomintaan (Judgment) sekä ei-inhimillisten ilmiöiden ja asioiden arvioinnin arvottamiseen (Appreciation) (Martin & White 2005, 42–43). Valitsin tämän pääjärjestelmän siksi, että se auttaa minua vastaamaan tutkimuskysymykseeni siitä, millaista arvottavaa kieltä käytetään anomuksien argumentoinneissa syyttömyyden ja uskottavuuden kannalta. Kyseinen järjestelmä tarjoaa tätä varten keinon, jolla voidaan systemaattisesti analysoida moraalisia arviointeja, tunteita sekä asioiden ja olosuhteiden arvottamista.

Jätin analyysissä Engagement-pääjärjestelmän systemaattisen tulkinnan ulkopuolelle, sillä se tarkastelee ensisijaisesti eri äänien ja näkökulmien esittämistä teksteissä (Martin & White 2005, 35, 92). Olen todennut tällaisia piirteitä esiintyvän aineistossa, esimerkiksi anomusten kirjoittajien viittauksina todistajiin, syyttäjiin tai auktoriteetteihin. Kuitenkin näiden äänien ja näkökulmien yksityiskohtainen tutkiminen olisi siirtänyt tutkimuksen ensisijaisen fokuksen muualle. Viimeistä pääjärjestelmää, Graduation-järjestelmää, ei myöskään tulkittu systemaattisesti analyysissä. Graduation-pääjärjestelmä tutkii arvioiden intensiteettiä ja kategorioiden asteikkoa (Martin & White 2005, 137–140). Tämän pääjärjestelmän kattavampi tarkastelu olisi laajentanut tutkimuksen fokusta, mikä olisi vaikuttanut kykyyni vastata tutkimuskysymykseeni. Täten Appraisal-teoriaa on sovellettu valikoivasti tutkimuksessani, mutta perustellusti, jotta analyysi pysyy selkeästi rajattuna arvottavien merkitysten tarkasteluun. Tämä mahdollistaa syvällisen lähiluvun Attitude-järjestelmän sisällä ilman, että analyysi hajaantuu liikaa teorian kaikkiin osa-alueisiin.

Primaari tiedonlähde ja menetelmät

Tämän tutkielman aineisto koostuu 19 anomuksesta, jotka on koottu teoksesta *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (2009). Tekstit on valittu siten, että ne on laadittu vuonna 1692, kuuluvat samaan tekstilajiin ja palvelevat yhtenevää tarkoitusta. Näin aineistosta on rajattu pois myöhemmät, esimerkiksi maineen palauttamiseen tai korvauksiin liittyvät anomukset, jotka eivät enää kohdistuneet kuolemantuomioiden välttämiseen.

Anomukset edustavat vakiintunutta oikeudellista tekstilajia, jolle ovat tyypillisiä alisteinen suhde auktoriteettiin sekä tavanomaiset ilmaisutavat. Tutkimuksessa arvottavaa kieltä analysointiin sekä määrällisesti että laadullisesti, painottuen lähilukuun. Analyysi perustuu

Appraisal-teoriaan, ja tulkintaa on pyritty tukemaan sekundaarisilla tiedonlähteillä. Analyysissä pyrittiin tunnistamaan asennoitumisen ilmaukset, ja näitä ilmauksia tarkasteltiin niiden jakautumisen sekä arvioiden kohteiden kannalta. Määräanalyysi keskittyi esiintymien konkreettiseen ilmaisuun, kun taas laatuanalyysissä keskityttiin sekä arvioiden esittäjiin että niiden kohteisiin sekä ilmaisun luonteeseen. Tekstien moniäänisyyttä ja asteittaisuutta tuotiin keskustelussa esille, kun ne tarjosivat tulkinnan kannalta olennaisia argumentteja.

Tulokset ja niiden pohdinta

Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena oli tarkastella arvioivan kielen käyttöä anomuksissa, jotka liittyivät Salemin noita-oikeudenkäynteihin vuonna 1692. Anomuksien analyysi osoitti, että arvioiva kieli oli keskeinen osa anomuksissa esitettyä argumentaatiota. Erityisesti ihmisten toiminnan arviointia käytettiin usein, ja anomuksen kirjoittajat korostivat toistuvasti moraalisten arvojen arviointia syytettyjen viattomuuden ja nuhteettomuuden osoittamiseksi. Tutkimuksessa esitettiin, että nämä arviot olivat tarkoituksellisia, sillä niiden avulla pyrittiin rakentamaan kuvaa hyvistä kristityistä, joita kohtaan esitetyt syytökset olivat kiistanalaisia. Samaan aikaan anomuksissa esiintyi negatiivisia arvioita, jotka kohdistuivat syyttäjiin, muihin todistajiin ja oikeusprosessiin, ja ne pyrittiin leimaamaan epäluotettaviksi ja epäreiluiksi. Tutkimuksessa esitettiin, että tämä toimi keinona kyseenalaistaa syytösten pätevyyttä ja oikeudenmukaisuutta oikeudenkäynnissä. Anomukset olivat kirjoitettu ennaltasovitulla, alistuvalla sävyllä, mutta niistä näkyi myös halu puolustaa syytettyjä ja vastustaa syytteitä noidaksi leimauksen uhan alla.

Affect-alaryhmää eli tunteiden ilmaisua esiintyi aineistossa huomattavasti vähemmän kuin Judgment-alaryhmää eli inhimillisen toiminnan arviointia. Vaikka vetoamuksissa viitattiin kärsimyksen ja pelkoon, näitä tunteita pyrittiin usein ilmaisemaan hillitymmin. Tunteet muodostuivat osaksi laajempaa argumentaatiota ja pyrkivät tukemaan Judgment-alaryhmää. Tutkimuksessa esitettiin, että anomusten kirjoittajat pyrkivät säilyttämään uskottavuutensa käyttämällä anomusten ennaltasovittua kieltä, jossa liiallinen tunteellisuus saattoi heikentää argumentaation tehoa. Myös Appreciation-alaryhmä eli asioiden ja olosuhteiden arviointi jäi aineistossa pienemmäksi. Alaryhmää käytettiin pääasiassa kuvaamaan esimerkiksi vankien olosuhteita tai arvioimaan todistusaineiston luotettavuutta. Näiden arvioiden tehtävä oli tukea anomusten yhtenäistä argumentaatiota, joten ne eivät ole yhtä keskeisessä roolissa kuin moraalinen arviointi. Tutkimuksessa esitettiin, että tämä korostaa anomusten keskeistä

tavoitetta, eli vakuuttaa lukijan syytettyjen moraaliseen nuhteettomuudesta ja uskottavuudesta.

Tutkimus toi myös esiin Appraisal-teorian soveltuvuuden historiallisten tekstien analyysiin. Teorian avulla pystytään systemaattisesti tarkastelemaan, miten evaluatiiviset merkitykset rakentuvat kielellisesti ja miten ne liittyvät laajempiin sosiaalisiin ja kulttuurisiin konteksteihin. Samalla on kuitenkin huomattava, että historiallisen aineiston analyysi sisältää aina tulkinnallisia haasteita, sillä kaikkia tekstien taustalla vaikuttaneita merkityksiä ja konteksteja ei voida täysin jälleenrakentaa.

Lopuksi

Tässä tutkielmassa tavoitteena oli tutkia arvioivan kielen käyttöä anomuksissa, jotka kirjoitettiin Salemin noitaoikeudenkäyntien yhteydessä vuonna 1692. Tutkielmassa käytettiin Appraisal-teoriaa, jota soveltaen osoitettiin anomusten rakentuvan moraalisten arviointien ympärille. Tämä Judgement-alajärjestelmä toimi keskeisenä keinona, jolla anomuksien kirjoittajat esittivät syytetyt nuhteettomina, hyvinä kristittyinä. Tunteiden ja olosuhteiden arviointi jäi pienemmäksi rooliksi, pääasiassa tukien Judgment-alajärjestelmää. Tutkimuksessa osoitettiin, että anomukset eivät pelkästään noudattaneet niille ennaltasovittuja piirteitä, vaan pyrkivät myös harkittujen kielimuotojen avulla vakuuttamaan lukijansa kirjoittajien näkemyksistä.

On kuitenkin huomioitava, että tutkimusta rajoittavat tietyt tekijät. Aineisto oli kooltaan rajallinen ja keskittyi vain tiettyyn ajanjaksoon sekä tekstilajiin, mikä vaikuttaa tulosten yleistettävyyteen. Lisäksi Appraisal-teorian soveltaminen oli tässä tutkielmassa osittainen, sillä analyysi keskittyi pääasiassa Attitude-järjestelmään, eikä kaikkia teorian osa-alueita tarkasteltu systemaattisesti. Myös menetelmän tulkinnallinen luonne tuo mukanaan subjektiivisuutta analyysiin, erityisesti historiallisten tekstien kohdalla, joissa kontekstia ei voida täysin uudelleenrakentaa.

Tulevaisuuden tutkimuksissa olisi mahdollista laajentaa aineistoa kattamaan myös muita samanaikaisia tekstilajeja, jolloin arvottavan kielen käyttöä voitaisiin vertailla keskenään. Lisäksi Appraisal-teorian kaikkien osa-alueiden systemaattinen analysointi voisi tarjota syvällisemmän kuvan siitä, miten merkityksiä rakennetaan ja neuvotellaan näissä teksteissä.

Näin tuleva tutkimus voisi entisestään syventää ymmärrystä siitä, miten kieli toimii uskottavuuden ja sosiaalisen neuvottelun välineenä historiallisissa konteksteissa.