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# *Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture, 1500-1750*

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Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti and Donatella Pallotti

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## Editorial

Why another volume on historical epistolary discourse since increasing scholarly attention has recently been paid to its development in different periods and from different angles (just to mention a few recent contributions: Dossena and Fitzmaurice 2006; Nevalainen and Tanskanen 2007; Dossena and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008; Palander-Collin 2010, Cottone and Chiavetta 2010; Daybell 2012; Dossena and Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012)? A number of seminal studies have been published focussing on various aspects of letter writing ranging from those related to the familiar letter (Fitzmaurice 2002) to those associated with epistolary communities beyond the domestic or intimate context that used handwritten texts to foster a shared set of values, be it religious, political or of some other nature (Van Houdt *et al.* 2002; Schneider 2005). From official and professional exchanges (Dossena and Fitzmaurice 2006) to the investigation of social connectedness in personal correspondence, letter writing straddles the divide between private and public communication (Brownlees, Del Lungo and Denton 2010).

The present volume focuses on the early modern period, which represents a turning point in the social function of letter writing. The years from the early sixteenth century through to the early seventeenth century, according to the most notable expert on early modern correspondence, James Daybell, were crucial to the development of the genre of the vernacular English letter (Daybell 2012, 19). Indeed they were, but we would add that in the remainder of the early modern period correspondence also underwent significant functional changes, and not just in England. It is during this time that letter writing served a variety of new functions different from the medieval ones, functions that would characterise correspondence in the following centuries: while mercantile correspondence continued the medieval tradition of mixing the personal and public elements well into the modern period (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012), correspondence between members of gentry families acquired a marked social function, its main purpose being the establishment and maintenance of social ties.

Through the presentation of case studies, the present volume aims at shedding light on the pivotal early modern period when the culture of epistolarity shifted from the public to the more personal sphere and crucial functional changes occurred in both letter writing and reading practices. In the late medieval familiar/mercantile letters such as, for instance, the Paston Letters or the Cely Papers, the transmission of news was the main function. Correspondents belonging to the gentry and mercantile class exchanged information about family affairs but also kept a network of people informed about financial and political events (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2010). In short, the familiar letter was then a semi-public document due also to the fact that literacy was not widespread and third parties were employed in both the drafting and reading of written messages which, in turn, were not infrequently accompanied by oral messages conveyed by bearers. This changed significantly in the early modern period thanks to both

an increasing number of people writing their own letters and the emergence of new modes of disseminating information and establishing social ties. It can be said that in this period the letter permeated every aspect of familiar and social life (Fitzmaurice 2002, 4). Indeed it became the main means of communication in a world of extended contacts – contacts thinned out by distance through business, travel and other forms of separations (Brant 2006, 1), and the kind of document most commonly written by literate adults. Political news was normally transmitted by means of official and diplomatic letters (Brownlee 2012), but personal letters could still have the function of keeping correspondents informed of public events, both domestic and international. Moreover, the increasing literacy of women (Couchman and Crabb 2005) contributed to the development of ‘networking’ letters, a genre which influenced the style of the familiar letter in that it promoted greater confidentiality and led to more intimate and private forms of communication (Daybell 2001, 7).

In order to assess and discuss points of convergence and divergence between writing practices in different contexts in early modern Europe, the present volume brings together scholars from a wide disciplinary spectrum, working on the linguistic, literary, historical and more broadly cultural features of correspondence. It comprises a number of contributions presenting case studies on differences in letter types, on the role played by letters in self-fashioning, social networking, and knowledge distribution. Particular attention is paid to such issues as letters as paratextual material, the physical description of manuscripts and editorial practices in historical letter collections, correspondence as multifunctional interaction between real people, the construction of the epistolary/discursive identities of the addressees of letters, gender differences in conveying information or in attaining persuasive goals, and the role of letters as literary artefacts.

The novelty and originality of this volume lies first of all in the socio-historical and spatial perspective adopted. Indeed a wide spectrum of letter types is presented; these belong to different European countries, namely England, Italy and France, and are produced by a number of correspondents ranging from the educated to the less educated, or even illiterate, from family members to professional and business people. The scope of the volume is thus extended to encompass the investigation of a variety of writing styles in different contexts of use. A second aspect which characterises the present collection of essays is the multifariousness of the methodological perspectives adopted by the authors of the articles, from pragmatolinguistic analyses to literary and historical investigations.

Furthermore, the case studies presented in this volume address a wide range of topics, some of them novel in the investigation of early modern epistolary discourse: the contributions range from the more traditional reconstruction of the addressor’s self-image to the less studied discursive identity of the recipient, from the focus on letters as ego documents to their dialogic character. Of course letters are a form of self-presentation in that they may tell us a lot about their writers or encoders (on the term ‘encoder’ see Dossena 2012), but they also

reveal a lot about their addressees and the interpersonal relationships between the correspondents. Another topic dealt with in various articles is the construction of epistolary networks which, in the early modern period, contributed not only to reinforce family or patronage links, but could also be the basis of literary practices as the rise of the epistolary novel proves. Gender differences, which were not marked in the Middle Ages (though see Watt 2004), tend to emerge clearly in the early modern period (Daybell 2001, 2005, 2006, Nevalainen 2002) as female literacy increased and contributed to the development of a specific style characterising epistolary exchanges between women. The various case studies explored in this volume highlight a number of features of epistolary discourse in the early modern period – some traditional such as the mixing together of conveying/asking for information and the practical function of letter writing, others innovative such as the epistolary expression of affection and friendship – each prevailing according to the relationship between the correspondents and the purpose of the message. This is perhaps the most striking change that occurred in this period: the extension of epistolary functions to cover various social and personal communicative needs.

The volume opens with an introductory essay by Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti that surveys the increasing scholarly interest that letters and letter writing have recently aroused. Del Lungo Camiciotti highlights three major areas in which the study of letters and epistolary form plays a pivotal role. First of all, letters are an important source of information for socio-historical investigation, the history of languages and sociolinguistics. Secondly, letters as documents and material objects contribute to the reconstruction of official relationships and exchange of information, thus casting some light on the interaction and discursive practices at different social levels. Thirdly, in the early modern period, the epistolary form gave rise to different fictional genres which provided models that in turn enriched and stimulated actual letter writing.

The essays which appear in the 'Case Studies' sections are devoted to particular issues related to letters and letter writing in early modern Europe: from editorial, material and paratextual issues to the importance of epistolary networks in diplomatic, scientific, social and familial transactions; from the use of letters for political aims to the impact of (fictional) letters on stage. These issues are approached from a variety of perspectives that encompass philological, literary, linguistic and historical studies. On the whole, the articles stimulate a nuanced appreciation of the early modern letter and encourage a dynamic and integrative perspective beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries.

An example of this integrated approach is represented by Carlo Maria Bajetta's article which addresses Elizabeth I's Italian letters, so far partially neglected by critical literature. Careful attention to the physical forms of manuscripts and documents allows Bajetta to reach warranted conclusions about the production of the royal correspondence as a multi-agent collaboration. Letters from, but also

to, Elizabeth I are the object of Giuliana Iannaccaro's and Alessandra Petrina's essay which explores some of the different rhetorical strategies and epistolary modalities used in two corpora of letters, the first containing missives by the Queen, the second comprising petitionary letters which preface works presented to her. The discursive negotiations at work in the letters analysed by Iannaccaro and Petrina respond to the sixteenth-century logic of power and share the contemporary language of patronage and protection. The role of dedicatory, as well as postscript, letters is also investigated by Emmanouil Aretoulakis who focuses on the paratextual material which accompanied More's *Utopia*, edition after edition. Written by More's friends and acquaintances who belonged to continental intellectual circles, these letters not only served to legitimize More's endeavour but they also attempted to confer reality on the Utopian island itself.

The exchange of letters among members of intellectual and family circles is the main object of a group of five essays which are contained in the second section of the 'Case Studies'. Here, the construction of epistolary networks is investigated from the points of view of sociopragmatics, discourse analysis and stylistics. For example, by exploring the diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Bodley, Gabriella Mazzon highlights the interplay between directness and indirectness in a particular text-type, the diplomatic letter, which partly differs from both the business and the personal letter. In the case of Henry Oldenburg's letters, Maurizio Gotti shows how epistolary exchange within a scientific community functioned not only as an instrument for sharing views and validating one's observations and findings but, more crucially, how it facilitated the creation of the specialist community itself.

In the early modern period, corresponding with friends and relatives became a quite common social activity: it reinforced family and patronage ties. As shown by Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti and Eleonora Chiavetta, women played an important part in the construction of epistolary networks. Whereas the exploration of Mary Delany's letters allows Chiavetta to highlight how the author mirrors and shapes through discourse different versions of self and different aspects of her interpersonal relationships, the examination of Lady Corwallis Bacon's correspondence by Del Lungo Camiciotti brings into focus a partly overlooked aspect of women's letters. It concerns, namely, the way in which the recipients' identity is constructed and negotiated through epistolary interaction within the group.

Letters also provide a rich field for investigating stylistic features of epistolarity within exchanges between members of a particular circle. In the light of the social network theory, Donatella Montini sheds light on how Samuel Richardson's 'dramatic style' impinged upon the style of members of his epistolary network.

Letters can also be important documents to afford access, though filtered, to subjects who, because of their social condition and level of education, could hardly make their voices heard. It is the case of the Lyon weavers whose petitions to Louis XV and Monseigneur Poulletier are analysed by Carmelina Imbroscio.

Her reading of these important historical documents reveals how the workers were fully aware of their violated rights and the exploitation they had to face. If letters can be used to express political and social concerns, they can also be a source of information to reconstruct the life and activity of personalities, as is the case with Michelangelo's *Carteggio*. In his essay devoted to the artist's correspondence, Adelin Charles Fiorato highlights and explores three main aspects of Michelangelo's letters, the first and second concerning two different kinds of relationships, those with relatives and those with collaborators and patrons. The third aspect touches a more intimate dimension, encompassing the artist's reflection on sickness and death. Thus, Michelangelo's letters offer an illuminating, though mediated, glimpse of the latent aspects of his projects and personal traits.

Alongside 'real' letters, used by 'real' people, to convey all kinds of information, both social and personal, during the early modern period, the fictional uses of the epistolary form flourished. Letters appeared on stage and in prose narratives in forms that imitated the conventions of ordinary correspondence. In Kerry Gilbert-Cooke's article, Shakespeare's stage letters are considered in the light of contemporary epistolary theory. In particular, Gilbert-Cooke argues that the accurate observance, even in drama, of the precept according to which the language of a letter should adapt itself to its recipient, witnesses a more pervasive influence of epistolary theory than previously thought.

Along much the same lines as the previous issues of *JEMS*, this volume features an Appendix, edited by Paola Pugliatti, which includes a wide spectrum of letters and letter types belonging to different cultural contexts in different periods; its aim is to illustrate the manifold uses to which the letter might be put.

As the present collection of essays shows, the social and creative dimensions of the letter form are very variable and, no doubt, its plural manifestations, striking pervasiveness and nuanced complexities in early modern culture deserve deeper investigation and further scrutiny.

Letters from the past are fascinating documents; they appeal to curious and perhaps 'indiscreet' minds, which read, actually re-read, in the present and in a different context, what originally was not intended for them. In this sense, letters offer us a fleeting illusion of a privileged access to alterity.

Our special thanks go as ever to Arianna Antonielli, our indefatigably patient and kind journal manager, and to the dedicated editorial team who made once again the publication of *JEMS* possible. We are particularly grateful to John Denton, always generous with his knowledge and time. We also wish to thank the friends and colleagues who, by responding to our call for papers, have given life to this volume. The many letters we exchanged throughout the process are a testimony of our collegial endeavour and mutual cooperation.

Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti and Donatella Pallotti

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# PART ONE

## General Overview



# Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture: An Introduction

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## *Abstract*

The recently renewed scholarly interest in historical letters and letter writing has given rise to several studies which explore the culture of epistolarity from different perspectives. The article offers an introduction to recent scholarship on epistolary discourse and practices in early modern culture. Given the importance of letters as data for several types of diachronic investigation, the article focuses on three points that are crucial for an understanding of the relevance of epistolary discourse itself in early modern European culture. Firstly, letters are invaluable data for historical linguistics, to which they provide information for the history of languages, and sociohistorical and sociolinguistic research. A second recent field of investigation considers letters as documents and material items; the results of research in this area have contributed to the reconstruction of official relationships and information exchanges in past cultures and shed light on social interaction. A third, more traditional area of study, deals with the letter as a form that has given rise to many different genres across the centuries, both practical and literary.

*Keywords:* Critical Approaches, Letters, Letter Writing, Early Modern Culture

## 1. *Introduction*

The historical study of epistolary discourse is a fascinating topic in itself as, in addition to contributing to our knowledge of past linguistic stages of European languages, it opens a window on the practices of letter writing and reading of past ages and the socio-cultural reality they are embedded in. It provides an invaluable means of reconstructing ways of communicating both in the public and the personal spheres. From the linguistic diachronic point of view letter writing is a particularly rewarding object of study since epistolary discourse is perhaps the most ancient form of attested writing (Petrucci 2008) thus allowing the investigation of its features across time and cultures. Furthermore, epistolary discourse is a fully fledged textual genre in its own right, as it is distinguishable from other types of discourse by specific pronominal and linguistic features (Altman 1982), which render it a unique genre (Dossena and Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012); it is multifunctional and extremely varied in that the official and practical use of the letter has developed over the ages

and given rise to different textual subgenres ranging from the Pauline epistles incorporated in the Bible to the medieval letter as an administrative document or treatise of spiritual instruction, from scientific correspondence and newsletters in the seventeenth century to the epistolary novel of the eighteenth century, from personal to commercial correspondence which particularly developed in the late modern period. In brief, the investigation of correspondence may give insights into both particular aspects of communication in specific periods and the socio-cultural functions it serves.

Since the late twentieth century socio-linguists, social historians, and literary scholars have become increasingly interested in the letter as genre and letter writing as social and cultural practice. The renewed academic interest in letters has resulted not only in scholarly studies, but also in the publication of letter collections<sup>1</sup> and useful specialised bibliographies (just to mention three recent ones see Daybell 2005a, 2006a, Daybell and Gordon 2012) which have enlarged the amount of data and analytic tools available to scholars and helped define the relevance of letters to shed light on socio-cultural issues such as, for instance, the rate of literacy or women's education in past periods. The study of historical correspondence has also clarified orthographic variation and linguistic change in progress in past periods. Most scholarly contributions focus on the whole modern period as this was a great age of letters and letter writing all over Europe and beyond; and many studies tend to concentrate on the eighteenth century (see Postigliola *et al.* 1985) considering that it is in this century that the epistolary genre reached a perhaps unsurpassed sociocultural prominence as a form of communication and expression, and on the late modern period when correspondence reached an unsurpassed volume and social extension (Boureau and Chartier 1991). It is, however, in the early modern period that correspondence acquired the characteristics and uses that were to become typical of the genre in the whole modern period.

Given the importance of letters as data for several types of diachronic investigation, I will now make a few general points, which are all relevant to the present volume. Firstly, letters as data for historical linguistics. Within this field of study, they provide information for sociohistorical investigation, the history of languages, linguistic diachronic investigation, and historical sociolinguistics. Secondly, letters as documents and material items which can contribute to the reconstruction of official relationships and information exchanges in past cultures and shed light on social interaction. Thirdly, the letter as a form that has given rise to many different genres across the centuries, both practical and literary.

## *2. Letters as Data for Historical Linguistics*

Let us start with the linguistic aspect. In the early modern period many sociolinguistic changes occurred throughout Europe. Among the external factors that most influenced the development and increased the use of vernacular

languages were literacy, urbanisation, and technological advances such as the introduction of the printing press. Printing often serves as a medium for language maintenance as shown by the preservation of the language of religion in the many religious texts that were printed in the early modern period. However it also had a positive effect on reading ability which increased significantly in this period. According to the social historian David Cressy (1980, 141-177) in early modern England full literacy amounted to ten percent of the male, and one per cent of the female population, though there were more people who could read than those who could write.

Yet, if we take into account correspondence as a source of data for investigating literacy, the figures proposed by historians turn out to be slightly inaccurate. Indeed figures indicated by historical sociolinguists who use correspondence as data are different, particularly as to women's ability to read and write their own letters. According to Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003, 202) modern sociolinguistic models can be fruitfully applied to earlier states of a language like English, provided that these models are fed with period-specific information. This raises the issue of the relevance of correspondence as a source of data in the early modern period both in general, since more and more people wrote their own letters, and specifically for women's overall growing literacy. Nevalainen (2006, 136) points out that, though it is only towards the end of the early modern period that women playwrights and poets begin to appear in print (among them Aphra Benn and Margaret Cavendish), yet there are private records such as personal letters and diaries that provide material for studying gender differences in early modern English. Studies by Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg and other researchers of the Helsinki team in fact base their analyses on the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), compiled at the University of Helsinki for the study of early modern English in its social context, where the proportion of female letter writers is about twenty per cent throughout the period (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003, 46-47). Letter writing is thus particularly important for the study of women's language use and literacy; it is also important to analyse linguistic change led by female speakers/writers in this period (Nevalainen 2000, 2002). Nevalainen (2000, 38) argues in fact that the social variable of gender has an important role to play in the diffusion of supralocal features which in the course of time became part of the morphology of Standard English. The CEEC has also been exploited to shed light on the language of daily life in past ages (Nurmi *et al.* 2009). The language of personal letters has been shown to be close to spoken language in many ways (Biber and Finegan 1989, 1992). So the study of personal correspondence between identifiable individuals, male and female from different geographical locations, has not only provided a rich source of material for the study of language variation and change in the history of English since language change typically emerges from spoken language, but also enabled to reconstruct the interactional use of language in the social contexts

of everyday life (Nurmi *et al.* 2009, 1). Small corpora, such as those composed of the letters belonging to the network of a scientist or literary man, can also offer interesting insights into conventional as well as idiosyncratic expressions in epistolary discourse (Fitzmaurice 2003).

In addition to sociolinguistics, the pragmatic approach provides the tools for a deeper understanding of the process of letter writing and its related cultural practices. The seminal work by Fitzmaurice (2002a) on familiar correspondence addresses the familiar letter, both fictional and real, as a pragmatic act, an exchange between actors. In both this work and other contributions (Fitzmaurice 2002b, 2002c), the author sheds light on the code that marks the discourses of the eighteenth century through the analysis of linguistic interaction and politeness strategies that reveal the real bond between the correspondents. The focus is on the letter as an act designed to have some effect upon an addressee (Fitzmaurice 2002a, 11), but much attention is also paid to the ways in which writers construct the objects of their address and how this construction shapes their epistolary discourse. This approach overcomes the conception of the letter merely as a form of rhetorical self-presentation (on this point see Van Houdt *et al.* 2002) as in humanistic letters, which still tended to follow the rather formal tradition of the medieval *ars dictaminis* (on its waning in the early modern period see Camargo 2001). These letters were public as they tended to enhance literary fame and scientific reputation or deal with literary and scientific controversy, though they might also be used to stress patronage and friendship. By applying pragmatic analysis to correspondence, it is also possible to reconstruct epistolary historical meaning as dialogic: it is not just writing, but also reading, and their mutual relation that generates meaning. Letters are genuine interaction between correspondents in which their identities are linguistically and discursively produced. Moreover, the letter genre allows us to observe how authorial selves and participant relationships change from one letter to another and how such changes affect the linguistic style adopted by the writer (Palander-Collin 2009, 54). The individual's social rank hierarchical relationships are an important feature of early modern European society, and they are constituted by various discursive practices, for instance in English letters by patterns of self-mention (I) and addressee inclusion (You *vs* Your Lordship/Worship), because these overtly signal the degree of author presence in the texts and the author's wish to involve the addressee in the communicative situation according to the mutual relationship of the correspondents (Palander-Collin 2009, 54-55). In particular the analysis of address forms in salutations and closing formulae can reveal the variation characterising the interpersonal relationships between correspondents, like private/public, informal/formal, family/non-family, intimate/distant, as well as power hierarchies that are relevant in both family and non-family contexts (Palander-Collin 2010). In brief, historical socio-pragmatics sheds light on the ways in which texts are used to achieve particular goals in social interaction.

A field closely related to the linguistic one is that of the reconstruction of past cultures or sociohistorical contexts by using correspondence as data. Today novel attention has been paid to the reconstruction of past cultural practices related to the transmission of information through manuscript missives (Barton, Hall 1999; Schneider 2005; Bethencourt and Egmond 2007; Daybell 2012). Studies may be located at the intersection of historical pragmatics and the study of manuscript letters such as Williams (2013), who offers a multidimensional analysis of letters defined as a particular type of written communicative activity that can be best understood by viewing the original sources. By examining the epistolary manifestation of correspondents' attitudes towards each other through the use of speech acts, rhetorical strategies, and linguistic conventions of letter writing, it is possible not only to hear past epistolary 'voices' (Steen 1988), but also to shed light on familial and wider social contexts. Brant (2006), in her comprehensive study on the British world of the Enlightenment, focuses on eighteenth century personal letters to reveal how people used to live, think, feel, and react, and not last use language. She describes the many roles that can be played by letter writers – parent, lover, criminal, citizen, traveller, historian, Christian – thus illustrating the many uses of correspondence to express a polite discourse common to business and social life across Europe. The study of early modern epistolary discourse corroborates the picture of contemporary British society outlined by Bryson (1998) as a polite and hierarchical community where decency and deference emerged as rules of social interaction. 'Courtesy' and 'Civility' were among the values central to Tudor and Stuart assumptions and fears about the social and political order which caused a striking preoccupation with manners (Bryson 1998, 3). And this is reflected in epistolary discourse and its linguistic and pragmatic characteristics.

### *3. Letters as Documents and Material Items*

As to the second point, letters as documents and material items which can contribute to the reconstruction of official relationships and information exchanges in past cultures, as is well known, have been traditionally exploited as a quarry of data by social historians. In the context of this approach, the letter is examined not just as a genre, but also as a thing, an object that generates meaning both social and personal through complex material signs and can be delivered to the addressee/s in a variety of ways, ranging from the individual carrier, often entrusted with an oral message in addition to the written one, to the emerging postal system under Charles I. Given the new phenomenon of the expansion in non-European territories and the growing number of migrants to the new world, transatlantic correspondence has also recently received scholarly attention (Earle 1999; Bannet 2005). The study of the letter as material object has contributed in no small measure not only to increas-

ing our knowledge of writing technology and postal conditions in the early modern period, but also to reconstructing past social practices by shedding light on the role played by letters in everyday life of men and women. These studies illustrate how letter writing was still a collaborative, layered process rather than a private two-way exchange. However, it is in this period that the letter emerged as an increasingly 'private' form used for a widening range of functions in the personal sphere. Studies of the letter as material object focus on how letters worked, who wrote them, the ways they circulated, the meanings they mediated, thus linking up with the socio-cultural history of letters.

Following this approach the works by James Daybell deal with these issues by employing archived manuscript material. His recent work on the materiality of manuscript letters, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England* (2012), highlights the importance of studying the material aspects of early modern texts to reconstruct their historical meaning: the physical characteristics of original letters shed no less light on epistolary culture and practices than the analysis of rhetorical and linguistic features of letters or their content. His work demonstrates the complexity of the epistolary form that was at once a genre, a text and an object, and at the same time a localised document influenced by factors such as status, gender, and generation. The technology of writing saw the emergence of the letter as an increasing private form – a technology of the self – utilised for an increasing range of personal purposes, emotive and affective, spiritual and imaginative, clandestine and covert (Daybell 2012, 233). The results of the investigation of letters agree with the findings of different historical approaches in that what emerges clearly is the changing notion of selfhood (see for instance Sawday 1997). Gary Schneider also deals with the culture of early modern epistolarity. He focuses on the content of real letters to delineate features of early modern letter writing culture including the meaning of the public and the private, the question of literacy, the significance of the scribe, the uses of epistolary rhetoric, and the nature of the bearer/post (2005, 19). Though he uses as primary texts real letters, not letter writing manuals, Schneider highlights the relevance of these texts as constituents of the culture of epistolarity (on English writing manuals see Austin 2007) in that they influenced the writing style of both official and family correspondence. Thomas Cromwell, principal secretary to Henry VIII, was primarily responsible for an epistolary revolution in beginning to administer the increasingly centralised state by employing the circular letter to organize and marshal the government. The transformation of the administrative machinery also included formal changes in the letter itself, which were not primarily the result of state centralization, but the effects of Renaissance humanistic letter writing practice and manuals. The reenergization of the familiar letter in the same period was also a consequence of humanism and its discovery of letters of classical writers (in the first place Cicero's *Ad Atticum* and *Ad familiares*) initiated the shift away from the rigid medieval forms of the *ars dictaminis*. Erasmus (on his

epistolography see Jardine 1994) in his influential *De Conscribendis Epistolis* (Basel 1552) added the fourth category of the familiar letter to the classical trio of persuasive, encomiastic, and judicial letters. Moreover pedagogical manuals contributed to the civilization process in that letter writing began to be recognized as social behaviour through which one's courtesy and civility were exhibited and measured: the letter could serve as an alternative mode of communication and expression in moments of embarrassment and anxiety (Schneider 2005, 40-41). By the sixteenth century, humanists had claimed the letter book and the letter writing manual as their own; these however proliferated in the age of courtliness, sociability and civility and were written and subsequently published by literary men and women. Early letter books and writing manuals had much in common with early conduct books. At heart, they were prescriptive, offering various epistolary templates for operating within a highly complex and codified society of orders that rewarded deference and obedience within the family and beyond (Eurich 2011).

Another area where Daybell's studies have been particularly relevant is the investigation of women's literacy and writing skills. As is well known, in the Middle Ages too women belonging to the aristocracy, gentry and mercantile strata used correspondence to exchange information and for other practical purposes particularly in the late medieval period (Cherewatuk and Wiethaus 1993; Couchman and Crabb 2005). They dictated their vernacular correspondence to scribes and had letters read in family circles. In the early modern period they began to write their own letters and widen the range of correspondents beyond family and kin by participating in friendly and patronage networks to the point that the epistolary genre became strongly associated with women. Thus the study of women's letters can elucidate ideas and practices of gender. It is in fact the case that language and gender interact to construct complex socio-cultural identities particularly in oral and dialogic exchanges; so the study of women's epistolary discourse may shed light on many socio-cultural aspects. The works by Daybell (2001, 2006b) demonstrate that a larger amount of correspondence by women than we imagined has survived from the Tudor to the late modern period. Though social status carried more weight than gender, thus rendering male and female letters similar and on the whole equally functional, in some areas gender could play a role in shaping the text, as in the letters of petition written by women or in letters to family and friends displaying greater informality of purpose. According to Daybell women's correspondence led to the emergence of more personal epistolary forms, and an increasing range of private, introspective, flexible purposes for which letters were employed (2001, 2; 2005b).

Letters as documents have medieval origins. In the late Middle Ages in particular, they had been used to circulate appeals to Parliament or opinions on specific policy issues. In the early modern period, they took the form of printed petitions which, together with handbills, mark the transition in politi-

cal communication from norms of secrecy to appeals to public opinion. For instance, the *Midwives Just Petition* is a political handbill though it seemingly indicates that the civil war was perceived as affecting midwives' practices. The petition reputedly submitted by the midwives of London to Parliament in 1643 in fact demands that the war be stopped because this business was suffering with so many husbands called away.<sup>2</sup> The political importance of letters as documents is also shown by the presence of unequal power relationships revealed by the attention paid to correct social salutations and greetings not only in official but also in personal letters in both the Middle Ages and later periods.

The importance of correspondence and communication to cultural exchanges and as a source for socio-historical studies in early modern Europe can never be sufficiently stressed. Leading historians examine the correspondence of scholars, scientists, spies, merchants, politicians, artists, collectors, noblemen, artisans and even illiterate peasants. Letter exchanges between people belonging to specific communities had a major effect on the expression and diffusion of ideas and emotions, linking the individual with the society in which he or she was acting. The existence of numerous networks of epistolary communication is in fact a specific feature of the early modern period in Europe. Wide-ranging networks (in terms of either geography or number of correspondents) and vast amounts of correspondence became rapidly a characteristic of the period, ranging from small circles of family members or famous humanists to scientific and artistic, political and professional circles (Bethencourt and Egmond 2007, 10). Migration in particular stimulated the spread of letter writing all over Europe and overseas, a phenomenon that was particularly important for the lower strata of society throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain and Portugal, but which also affected English migrants to the new territories, even though a bit later as well as migrants for religious reasons throughout Europe. See, for instance, the correspondence of John and Margaret Winthrop (Twichell 1894) residing in Massachusetts colony in the seventeenth century. In this context, letters helped to maintain family ties and establish competing, plural identities (Bethencourt and Egmond 2007, 21-22). Religious missionaries to the Americas or the East also corresponded with members of their order thus establishing an informative network parallel to that of travellers to new territories. For instance the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci wrote letters from India and China between 1580 and 1609. His letters from China in particular are rich in observations about the Chinese language and customs which contributed to the knowledge of that country in Europe. To sum up, a typical development of the early modern period is that correspondence began to be used in everyday life by members of virtually all social strata, most of them illiterate, who had letters written or read aloud on a regular basis for personal and professional reasons.

#### 4. *The Letter as Genre*

The last point I would like to make is the adaptability of the epistolary form which gave rise to different written genres, both practical and literary. The letter has always been used for a variety of functions not necessarily related to the conveyance of news or the establishment of a relationship with an absent person and its very flexibility as mode of communication has historically allowed other genres to emerge from letter writing. Political institutions and businesses have communicated with people in the outside world through letters for a long period: medieval chanceries and the papal curia used correspondence to give publicity to their statutes through Letters Patent and Briefs, merchants used letters to exchange information about economic and political events, thus sometimes overlapping with diplomatic correspondence, and as financial instruments such as the letter of credit. Out of the many subgenres originating from the letter form we can also mention travel writing accounts linked to the historical expansion of the West, which developed into the late modern period in guidebook writing (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2013). Bazerman (1999) examines how a range of written business genres, such as bills of exchange and letters of credit, invoices and reports, have their roots in medieval letter writing. Also in the religious sphere the letter could be used to instruct a specific person or give spiritual counsel (see, for instance, in the late Middle Ages, William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptations*). These genres were all continued in the early modern period, when new genres and discourses also emerged such as the use of letters as a substitute for conversation and the development of epistolary discourse as narrative and literary text. In this period, letter writing led to the establishment of novel cultural and literary spaces made possible by the setting up of the national Post Office in the 1650s, which connected not only people, but also people with the capital city London and other places. How (2003) shows how the imaginations of letter writers were affected by the faster and more efficient postal services and how the opening up of mail routes created not just a geographical but also a mental space within which interactions of various kinds could take place.

Literary traditions concerning correspondence go back a long way. *Epistulae* by Cicero and Seneca set the model for humanistic epistles in Latin (for instance Poggio Bracciolini or Erasmus), which were followed by erudite vernacular letter collections. While the publication of letters as a literary genre was established in the sixteenth century, novels and essays in epistolary form emerged only in the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century. In this period the interest in the role played by letters in society and people's lives rendered the letter, in some cases, an ego-document which developed into fictional literary letter collections and epistolary novels, which rose to artistic prominence in the middle of the eighteenth century in many European countries. Also the use by women of letters for more personal and introspec-

tive purposes, contributed to the rise of epistolary novels whose heroines were female letter writers. Thomas O. Beebee (1999) investigates the link between non-fictional texts and fictional forms no longer viewed as autonomous. According to this scholar letter manuals deserve close attention as fictional and historical letters continuously influence each other in producing ideologies of social order. In England the pioneering author was Samuel Richardson who wrote more than one epistolary novel: *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) – which influenced the sentimental romantic novel, but also inspired the satirical *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741) by Fielding<sup>3</sup> – *Clarissa* (1748), *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). Epistolary novels also appeared in other European countries. Just to mention some very famous ones I can cite in Germany Wolfgang Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), followed in Italy by Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802), in Switzerland and France Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1661) and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782). It is typical of these novels to focus on the relationships formed by the different letter writers revealing complex psychological states and commenting on moral and artistic issues. Another literary use of letters is the major role they play in drama. They survive in abundance in Shakespeare's plays (Montini 1993, Stewart 2008): 111 letters appear on stage in the course of Shakespeare's plays, and his characters allude to many more (Stewart 2008, 4). They are not just plot devices to further the narrative as they may be in novels but primarily illustrate the variety of uses they can be put to as material objects in the early modern culture of letters.

An intermediate stage between non-fictional and fictional letters is represented by the printing of personal correspondence: printed letter collections make private matters public, and so reveal how tenuous the divide personal/public is, and also shed light on the formation of ideas of community in England in the early modern period (Barnes 2013). In this period, there was a renewed attention to classical epistles dealing with personal cases such as Ovid's *Heroides*, whose influence caused the production of innumerable imitations in the second half of the eighteenth century in France (Aschieri 1997, 41). These display an inclination to love unhappiness that was not a new theme in European literature, but that now showed features announcing the attention this topic was to receive in romantic literature. The twelfth century true letters of Abélard and Héloïse, became a classic text describing unhappy love. In their letters, originally written in Latin, the correspondents are passionate both in the remembrance of lost love and the attempt to reconcile that love with their respective monastic duty. Though, years later, Abélard composed a letter of consolation to a friend (*Historia Calamitatum*) where he displays the typical medieval conception of love as disorder and a source of unhappiness. It is the tension between the two emotional poles of the letters that captured the imagination of early modern readers of the correspondence and rendered it a classic template for later love letters. In England Alexander

Pope published in 1717, *Eloisa to Abelard*, an Ovidian heroic epistle inspired by the story of Héloïse's illicit love and secret marriage to his teacher Pierre Abélard. The Ovidian epistle<sup>4</sup> linked with the early modern autobiographical instinct in producing a type of literature concerned with love stories which not infrequently took the form of the epistolary novel<sup>5</sup>. In France the publication of the love correspondence of Julie de Lespinasse continues the tradition of unhappy love stories expressed in letters by dealing with the literary topics of the *absentia amantis* and loneliness (Aschieri 1997). A similar body of English love letters that have come down to us is represented by *The Letters to Sir William Temple* (1987) written by Dorothy Osborne between 1652 and 1654. Ottway (1996) notes that Osborne's letters anticipate in some way Richardson's *Clarissa*. She argues that Osborne, like Clarissa, is involved in a dangerous affair, that, just like Clarissa, she is torn between her sense of duty towards her family and desire for her correspondent, and that her love letters are full of 'novelistic' glimmerings (1996, 149). Indeed, the border between fiction and non-fiction may be fuzzy in the early modern period: on the one hand the real letters by Julie de Lespinasse and Osborne show features similar to those of epistolary novels in that they express a sentimental autobiography where narration dissolves into psychological states, a conception of life as romance; on the other, novels use letters to confer reality and truth to their stories. The divide between fictional and non-fictional may be so tenuous that even real letters are today considered a literary genre. Anita and Frank Kermode in the *Oxford Book of Letters* (1995) draw attention to the pleasures and associated pains of making love by mail and how reading other people's letters offers thrilling and guilty pleasure.

In literary circles, real letters by writers might overlap with the writing of an epistolary novel; for instance during the period in which Richardson attended to the complex drafting of *Clarissa* and *Grandison*, he was also involved in epistolary exchanges with a large number of correspondents (Montini 2009, 22). In scientific circles the epistolary exchange between scholars and scientists also gave rise to a new genre: in England the correspondence of the scientific community which was to be called the Royal Society gave rise to the journal reporting findings of scientific research (Atkinson 1996, Valle 1999). Ideas, knowledge and academic disputations of the seventeenth century circulated in Europe across epistolary networks long before they appeared in scholarly publications (Gotti this volume).

As indicated by Bethencourt and Egmond (2007, 20-21) behind the double status of correspondence in early modern Europe – as a means of communication and literary genre – a multitude of functions and effects are hidden. To name some of its indirect but crucial effects: correspondence helped to create a community of learned persons inside and outside universities, who were interested in the advance of knowledge. It reinforced the ethos of the republic of letters. It revealed the public and private sides of those who

corresponded, in terms of both thought and emotions, and thereby helped to spread the cultural notion of private and public sides to personalities. It facilitated transfers from the culture of the notary or the secretary to the culture of the philologist, the literary writer, or the first ‘journalists’, who made a living from newsletters. Through the varying intensity of exchanges it helped to create centres and peripheries of intellectual life in Europe. Moreover, the correspondence of women had a major impact on the promotion of their status in different European countries, asserting new values and raising gender issues. It is not by chance that women participated actively in the emergence of the novel as a new literary genre, and that Madame de Lafayette used the letter in *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) as a device to develop the narrative.

Hybrid sub-genres also emerged in the early modern period, such as the letter-journal and the newsletter, which gave rise in time to journalistic discourse. Letters might be printed with poetry, dialogues, and essays suggesting the acquisition of a narrative structure<sup>6</sup> on its own which differentiates them from the original manuscript letter motivated by some specific communicative goal. The transmission of news and intelligence refers to two opposite functions of correspondence, public and secret. On the one hand, print letters served a variety of practical public functions and encompassed a diversity of cultural meanings in early modern England. They engaged polemical debate, religious controversy, political propaganda, scholarly exposition, news reportage, among numerous other discourses (Schneider 2005, 183). In particular letters reporting periodical news have recently been given much attention (just to mention some very recent contributions: Raymond 2002, 2005; Brownlee 2011, 2012a; Fries 2012). News and information however could still also be transmitted through manuscript letters. Particularly the transmission of intelligence and diplomatic correspondence (Brownlee 2012b) relied on manuscript letters, secret post and even messages in cipher to keep information secret. In brief epistolarity had a crucial function in the context of early modern news transmission. The concept of “news” itself was a relatively novel one, and it modified early modern culture in significant ways. Professional manuscript newsletter writers began to flourish in the seventeenth century followed by print newsletter writing. The dissemination of news through print letters of news was a social mechanism in that individuals of all social ranks and positions exchanged a wide variety of information (Schneider 2005, 47-48).

### 5. *Concluding Observations*

I would like to conclude this general overview by summarising the contribution of recent methodologies to the study of letters and letter writing in the early modern period. As indicated by Nevalainen and Tanskanen (2007, 1) letter writing has always been a situated activity, so its material circumstances and discursive practices have naturally changed over time and may vary according

to context of use. The variety of ways in which epistolary communication can be contextualized derives from its diverse nature as social and discursive practice, and the analytical tools recently made available to scholars have opened up new ways of addressing these issues.

The most recent methodological approaches have offered novel insights in many areas as they range from the linguistic to the historical and literary. The use of corpus-linguistic tools to investigate digital collections has allowed the reconstruction of language variation and change in the early modern period and the combined approaches of discourse analysis, historical sociolinguistics and pragmatics have contributed to the conception of letter writing not just as individual but also as social and discursive practice and revealed how correspondents make use of politeness strategies to attain their communicative goals. The new attention to the letter as a material object has shed light on conventional epistolary aspects such as ways of transmitting messages and audience design within small and large correspondence networks. In brief, recent approaches to the study of real historical letters consider them primarily as context-sensitive social interaction rather than unique rhetorical pieces: the letter as activity rather than as product (Nevalainen and Tanskanen 2007, 9). Viewed from this perspective, writing letters becomes highly context-sensitive personal and social interaction and the shift of focus away from letters as product to letter writing as an activity shows the extent to which writers are the agents responsible for the outcome of the process (Nevalainen and Tanskanen 2007, 9).

<sup>1</sup> Recent years have seen the flourishing of online resources, both catalogues and digital editions of letters, such as the *Early Modern Letters Online*, a catalogue and archive of learned letters covering the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the Warburg Institute's *Major European Sources for Early Modern Letters*, comprising inventories and editions, the WEMLO, *Women's Early Modern Letters Online*. Recent printed collections include Wall (1983), Steen (1994), and Moody (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Petitions could also be used for satire. For instance the *Poor Whores' Petition* (1668) was a satirical letter addressed from brothel owners and prostitutes to Lady Castlemain, lover of King Charles II of England, to request that she come to the aid of her 'sisters'. In the Bawdy House Riots of 1668, brothels were burned and looted by London apprentice boys and men, who could neither afford their prostitutes nor, due to their working contracts, legally marry.

<sup>3</sup> It may be interesting to note that the observations by Sarah Fielding in her *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749) are presented as a direct address to the Author (beginning and ending like a letter: *Sir, ... Your very humble Servant*), where she reports some conversations among friends followed by two letters exchanged between Bellario and Miss Gibson, two participants in the fictional discussion about *Clarissa*. In the conclusion to the book, Sarah Fielding claims that the two letters complete the discussion in a sense by adding documentary evidence. She writes: 'These letters were shewn me by Miss *Gibson*, and thus, Sir, have I collected together all I have heard on your History of *Clarissa*, and if everything that Miss *Gibson* and *Bellarion* has said, is fairly deducible from the story, then I am certain, by the candid and good-natured Reader, this will be deemed a fair and impartial Examination, tho' I avow myself the sincere

admirer of *Clarissa*, and *Your very humble Servant FINIS*. To conclude, the divide between fictional/non-fictional letters is very fuzzy indeed. Sarah Fielding writes a real printed letter to Richardson containing an exchange of opinions in a form similar to the epistolary exchange (most opinions are directly quoted in inverted commas) and two presumably fictional letters. In brief she presents her observations on an epistolary novel by using an epistolary strategy.

<sup>4</sup>The epistle genre of letter writing dates back to the Roman verse letters popularized by Horace and Ovid; these are epistolary poems that read as letters in that they are poems of direct address. In the Middle Ages letters as petitions and literary artefacts were often in verse as this was a mnemonic aid. It is a specific development of the Renaissance, as observed by Guillén, that following Petrarch's *Epistolae metricae*, the neo-Latin verse epistle became quite fashionable: Janus Secundus, Petrus Lotichius, Kaspar Ursinus Vellius, and many others in numerous European countries, from Scotland to Croatia and Hungary wrote them. 'The verse letter is closely allied and at times confused with the elegy, satire, and other poetic genres. This *contaminatio* is essential to the career of the genre during the Renaissance... Horace is of course the principal model for the subgenre of the "moral epistle," which is central and exemplary. But the paradigmatic role of the neo-Latin poems will also be significant until the seventeenth century; for example in Germany for Opitz... The verse epistle in the vernacular tongues... will have an intermittent history'. Guillén alludes 'mostly to the crucial wave in the 1530s: Luigi Alamanni (*Opere toscane*, 1532), Clément Marot (*Suite de l'adolescence Clémentine*, 1533), Garcilaso de la Vega ('Epistola a Boscán', 1534), and Sir Thomas Wyatt too – if we admit the *contaminatio* in some of the satires, to John Poins, or to Francis Bryan – and a little later Sá de Miranda in Portugal. England will have a second wave, from Lodge in 1595 to Donne (*Letters to Several Personages* 1633 and 1635) and Jonson (*The Forest*, 1616). In France,... the next great poet writing epistles in French will be... La Fontaine' (1986, 72).

<sup>5</sup>On the autobiographical instinct in a variety of sixteenth and seventeenth century modes of writing in English, from letters and memoirs to pastoral, polemic and street ballads see Dragstra, Ottway and Wilcox 2000. See also Skura 2008.

<sup>6</sup>On the development of the narrative quality of letters see Fludernik (2007), who examines a corpus of early correspondence (1400-1650) from a pragmatic perspective. It seems that the epistolary novel's narrative quality stems from the fictionalizing tendencies in the letter collections which were used as models for writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and from the *Lettres Portugaises*. These presumed love letters of a Portuguese nun were first published anonymously in Paris in 1669 and later attributed, as a fictional work, to Gabriel-Joseph de la Vergne comte de Guilleragues (1628-1685). They were translated into several European languages and according to Würzbach (1969) set a precedent for sentimental and epistolary novels such as the *Lettres Persanes* by Montesquieu (1721) and *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1761). In fact, early letters in Fludernik's corpus are extremely formulaic in structure and form, and peculiarly resistant to expressive and narrative elaboration. The expression of subjectivity became a key feature of non-fictional letter writing only during the Restoration period (Fludernik 2007, 242). According to the results of Fludernik's research, letters between the fifteenth and mid-seventeenth century are not predominantly narrative and it is only in intelligence reports that the most satisfying narratives are found in the form of first- person accounts of adventures and experiences (Fludernik 2007, 259).

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PART TWO  
Case Studies



## *Textual and Paratextual Issues*



# Editing Elizabeth I's Italian Letters

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## *Abstract*

Much excellent scholarship has been based upon the fine editions of Elizabeth's letters and works which have been published to date. Modern scholars, however, have unjustly neglected her Italian missives, leaving untouched a critical source for scholarly work. By means of some hitherto unpublished documents, the article will endeavour to cast some light on Elizabeth's Italian correspondence, and will describe some of the challenges (and intriguing mysteries) one has to face when editing these letters.

*Keywords:* Correspondence, Editing, Elizabeth I, Letter Writing, Manuscripts

## 1. *Introduction*

Writing to Secretary Gabriel de Zayas in 1578, the Spanish Ambassador Bernardino De Mendoza noted that the Queen had recently paid him what almost amounted to a compliment: 'she said that if I were a *gaglioffo* (for she likes to use such terms as these in Italian) I should not have remained here so long' (Hume 1892-1894, II, 617). While the affirmation that Mendoza, a nobleman of the highest Spanish lineage was not, after all, 'a worthless knave' was not exactly flattering, the ambassador's incidental remark is intriguing. It is in fact revealing of Elizabeth's use of Italian in her diplomatic relationships, a language she often employed, in conversation and in writing, for irony, understatement, or as a means to establish a more intimate rapport with her interlocutor or addressee.

While evidence abounds as to Elizabeth I's proficiency in Italian, only a fraction of her letters in this language has so far come to light, and only one has been edited in Mueller and Marcus' *Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (2003, 5-6), the well-known first extant letter by the then Princess to Katherine Parr. A research project commenced in 2009 has so far located about 30 of these missives, including seven entirely in the Queen's hand. These documents comprise three addressed to Emperor Maximilian II in the mid-1560s, for which both the holograph drafts and the sent copies, in Elizabeth's best hand, have been discovered.<sup>1</sup> If one can feel quite confident about the authorial element in these texts, which deal with an issue as delicate as that of the Queen's marriage to Archduke Charles of Austria, much of the non-holograph texts touch on far less exciting topics. One may expect the Queen's most trusted collaborators, such as her Principal Secretaries and the office of the Latin Secretary, to have played a considerable part in the composition of such material. Questions of authorship

related to these letters clearly arise: how is one supposed to distinguish between what 'the Queen wrote' and what her ministers asked her to sign? As will become evident in the following pages, the Queen may have been more involved with their composition than has been previously acknowledged, which clearly calls for a new approach to these materials.

## 2. *Material Letters*

An analysis of the holographs shows that the Queen penned and revised her drafts very carefully. In the case of the Vienna letters, she later copied out the final versions in what are three exceptional examples of her best hand, resembling, in various ways, the beautiful calligraphic 'Palatino' script of her early writings. When one considers the attention which Elizabeth devoted to her lexical choices, her careful use of rhetoric, and examines a document such as the one reproduced here as figure 1 (which Elizabeth sent to Maximilian on 22 June 1567) it becomes evident that she considered both the verbal element and the presentation of the letters to be of equal importance for the content she intended to convey.<sup>2</sup>

Such significant features suggest a new approach to Elizabeth's epistolary texts. In *Shakespeare's Letters*, Alan Stewart has pointed out that the material evidence of Renaissance correspondence 'force[s] us to consider the letter not as a text but as an object' (2008, 66), and a number of recent publications have proven how fruitful such an approach can be (see e.g. Daybell and Hinds 2010; Daybell 2012; Allinson 2012). Focusing on material evidence (including, for example, seals, watermarks, endorsements and handwriting styles) can lead to exciting discoveries. When one examines the non-holograph material from this perspective, in fact, a number of important issues come to light; in particular one can understand that the commonly accepted accounts of how what F.J. Platt (1994) has termed the Elizabethan 'Foreign office' worked, may not always apply to the Italian missives – and perhaps not even to the entirety of the Latin correspondence.

A joint study of these two categories can, in fact, be very useful to dispel some generally held beliefs. In his edition of the letters sent to the Protestant Powers, for example, E.I. Kouri states that 'letters given under the signet were in English, but those belonging to the queen's diplomatic correspondence with foreign powers... were not sealed with the signet... The Royal signature written at the foot sufficed as proof of genuineness' (Kouri 1982, 13; see also below, note 14). The small but unique collection of letters sent to some continental Princes in Latin and Italian signed by Elizabeth preserved at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington (MS X d 138) seems to contradict this statement. All of the letters in this volume, in fact, show traces of a seal, and at least one bears a papered signet seal (Folger X d 138, fig. 2). The size of the wax stains (1.5 x 1.5 inches) visible on the letters in this manuscript are certainly compatible with the surviving seal, and with another one of the same dimension and appearance now in Folger V b 181. This detail is significant: the presence of a signet seal suggests that the production of these

missives should be seen in relation to an identifiable group of court employees, the clerks of the signet. Among these were men such as Thomas Windebanke, who often enjoyed a unique working relationship with Elizabeth, which even included transcribing the prose parts of her translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, into which she added, in her own hand, the poetry sections (National Archives, Kew, State Papers [hereafter 'SP'] 12/289; see the edition by Kaylor and Phillips, 2009; for a facsimile see Pryor 2003, 112). One can clearly see that an exploration of the links between these documents and the Elizabethan bureaucratic apparatus is one which can bear much fruit.

### 3. *Offices and Official Hands*

The production of the majority of the official foreign correspondence, the greater portion of which was in Latin, was dealt with by the secretariats of State (the office of the Principal Secretary) and of the Latin Tongue (cf. Kouri 1982, 13-18; Platt 1994; Allinson 2012, 17-19; 25-28). Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's first appointed Latin secretary, apparently made a point of penning and personally countersigning most of the Queen's missives which he was required to compose, and used collaborators mostly in order to keep copies of these texts for his records.<sup>3</sup> Ascham's successor in this post from about 1568, Sir John Wolley, had evidently a very different view of his position. Not being endowed with what one may term beautiful handwriting, and having to deal with a significantly increased workload, he regularly employed various copyists for both drafts and the final versions to be sent.<sup>4</sup> Probably in an effort to ensure that the numerous Latin letters by the Queen produced under his supervision were not too dissimilar from one another, Wolley seems to have established a 'house style' which featured engrossed capital letters placed to the left of the text to mark the beginning of paragraphs, and an overall similar script for the first line, which normally included a formal salutation starting with the name of the queen (fig. 2a).<sup>5</sup> His successor from 1596, Christopher Parkins, whose italic was much more acceptable, was to continue, at least in part, this tradition.<sup>6</sup>

The office of the Principal Secretary would frequently provide the Latin secretariat with either English versions of the missives to be translated or with Latin texts to be revised (cf. Kouri 1982, 13; Ryan 1963, 225; Platt 1994, 730; Allinson 2012, 46-47). Just like Ascham, Elizabeth's most trusted collaborator, William Cecil, first Baron Burghley from 1571, was frequently personally involved in the shaping of a letter, following its *iter* from draft to final copy. A typical example of the concluding phases of such a procedure may be seen in SP 70/8, fol. 12, in which the Lord Secretary provided the final touches to the Latin text prepared by Ascham (but probably not copied by him), including the various titles of the addressee, Frederick II of Saxony, the final formal salutation, and the place and date (fig. 3).<sup>7</sup>

With respect to the vernacular correspondence, it should be noted that during Elizabeth's reign no secretary for the Italian tongue was ever appointed. The office of the Latin secretary – at least, in theory – would have to deal with this language as well. Interestingly, though, no example of an Italian letter signed by Elizabeth in Ascham's hand has come to light, and in fact there are no Italian texts in his letter books (BL Royal 13 b I and Add MS 35840, the latter relating to Ascham's brief service under Mary I, 1554-1558), nor have any been included in the printed collections of letters attributed to him.<sup>8</sup> One could suppose that the Italian missives of this period were mostly taken care of by the collaborators of the Lord Secretary; however, out of five letters in this language extant for the years in which Ascham was in office, three are in Elizabeth's holograph, and only two (which will be discussed below) are in an unidentified scribal hand. It was, furthermore, not one of the scribes working for the Secretary, but Cecil himself who inserted the date '2 aprilis' on one of the Italian letters to Maximilian (cf. Bajetta forthcoming). It seems reasonable that Cecil, who could certainly read Italian, wanted to be privy to the contents of these letters: they touched, after all, upon a crucial theme for the realm of England, that of the marriage of its sovereign. Hence, in all likelihood, he may have dealt with them in a way similar to that in which he dealt with the most important Latin missives he usually handled.<sup>9</sup>

The man Elizabeth affectionately nicknamed her 'Spirit' had a prominent role in the foreign correspondence for a large part of the Queen's reign. He was appointed Lord Treasurer in 1572, a position which entailed rather different commitments from those of the Principal Secretary; nevertheless, he exercised considerable influence in the area of foreign policy also during the brief term of office (1572-1577) of his successor, Sir Thomas Smith – to the extent that Elizabeth sometimes refused to sign papers until Burghley had approved them. Furthermore, on Walsingham's death (which took place on 6 April 1590), the vacant secretaryship was not filled, and Burghley took over most of the work, with the assistance of his son Robert.<sup>10</sup> Burghley's careful scrutiny was thus behind much of the early correspondence as well as a number of the missives sent abroad in the 1590s.<sup>11</sup>

A series of Italian letters written between the early 1580s and mid-1590s represents a good example of how the analysis of handwriting can help to reconstruct the origin and textual vicissitudes of documents such as these. The first draft of a missive to the Albanian-born diplomat Bartolomeo Brutti (SP 97/2, fol. 41), penned by an unidentified scribe in 1590, was endorsed by Cecil and bears at least one correction made by him. The second, corrected version of this (on fol. 43) is in the hand of a different scribe ('A'), who also worked on a letter which Elizabeth addressed to Don Antonio of Portugal in 1594 (SP 89/2, fol. 216 and 219). The same man's hand is visible in the draft of a message sent in the following year to Ferdinando I of Tuscany (SP 98/1, fol. 107). A note on the back of this document states that the wording of this

missive was the result of the joint efforts of Sir John Wolley and 'Dr. James', almost certainly John James (c.1550-1601), one of the Queen's physicians and keeper of the State Papers. Scribe 'A', who inserted this note after the endorsement (in another man's hand), which typically summarised briefly the identity of the addressee and the purpose of the letter, may simply have wanted to signal the fact that he had had no role in drafting (or translating) the text. One wonders, though, if this addition could also be meant to indicate that the text was originally composed in Italian. Such an *iter* would probably not have been an exception: an English text of a missive sent to Venice in April 1584, headed 'translated out of the Italian Language' is, in fact, extant in SP 99/1, fols. 21-24. Pace Evan's suggestion (1923, 171) that 'the Latin secretary's duties were bureaucratic, not political', Wolley was paid £40 a year, a sum almost equivalent to the earnings of a minor country gentleman (cf. *ibid.*, 21 and Allinson 2012, 27). Valued at such an amount of money, his services may well have extended beyond the mere translation of documents. His unofficial sharing of the principal role of secretary with Robert Cecil (who had taken over a significant proportion of his father's responsibilities since the early 1590s) between 1593 and 1596, moreover, would almost certainly entail the drafting of important pieces of correspondence (Allinson 2012, 27; Croft 2008).

The main body of the sent copy of the letter to Ferdinando I (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 4183, fol. 36) was not, however, penned by James, the Latin Secretary, or by 'A'. It presents, in fact, the typical 'house style' of Wolley's secretariat (with a handwriting which will be identified as that of scribe 'B'). 'A', however, had a role in this document as well, since he added the place and date at the bottom of the text (fig. 4b) and the address 'Al Serenissimo Principe / il gran Duca di / Toscana' on what is now fol. 51. Quite interestingly, a third scribe ('C') was employed for an earlier draft, with a significantly different text (now SP 98/1, fol. 105). This man was evidently known to be a trusted servant of the court. It was him whom Agostino Graffigna (the Genoese merchant who briefly got involved in the negotiations with the Duke of Parma in the mid-late 1580s) asked to write a rather curious letter of self-recommendation which he had composed in 1586, in the hope that Elizabeth would sign it immediately and send it to the Doge of Genoa (cf. BL Cotton Nero B. VI, fols. 250-251).<sup>12</sup> Graffigna, who clearly knew that C's hand was used in royal correspondence, evidently saw calligraphy as a means of obtaining the sovereign's approval.

C's career may have begun at least some four years earlier, when he had penned a beautiful letter sent to Venice in 1582. He went on to write three more letters which were sent during the 1580s as well as one to the previous Duke of Florence, Francesco I, in 1585 (Mediceo del Principato 4183, fol. 26). While 'A' was working with the Cecils and Wolley (and, later, Parkins, cf. SP 98/1, fols. 113 and 118), 'C' was clearly collaborating with Wolley and the office of the previous Principal Secretary: some English drafts of the Venice

letters (BL Add 48126, fols. 175-176 and 178) were, in fact, annotated by Walsingham and his close collaborator and kinsman Robert Beale.<sup>13</sup>

What the data presented so far indicate is that the production of the Italian letters was far less straightforward than some modern accounts such as Platt and Kouri's would have us believe. These and other studies, in fact, have presented what appears to be a simplified *iter* for the production of the international correspondence: from State to Latin secretariat, and hence, via the Signet Office, to the hands of the Queen for her signature.<sup>14</sup> The evidence, however, would suggest that the process was less clear-cut: draft letters and copies, in fact, seem to go both ways between the office of the Principal Secretary and that of the Latin Tongue. In a way, this may be simply the result of what Beale, who was evidently familiar with the workings of the 'Foreign Office', suggested as standard practice:

When anie businesses cometh into the Secretarie's handes, he shall doe well for the ease of himselfe to distribute the same and to use the helpe of such her Majestie's servants as serve underneath him, as the Clercks of the Councell, the Clercks of the Signett, the Secretarie of the Latin and of the French tonge, and of his own servants. (Read 1925, I, 426)

Beyond the mere analysis of handwriting styles, one needs, then, to turn to the work carried out by these men.

#### 4. *From Hands to Heads*

One would expect the first category of these court employees, the clerks of the Privy Council, to have had a significant role in the shaping of the Italian letters. The Council clerks had frequently travelled abroad and/or had experience of diplomatic missions. They were important collaborators of the Secretary of State on matters of foreign policy, and were, at least at Whitehall, located conveniently near the Latin secretariat (cf. Platt 1982, 124; *id.*, 1994, 728-730; Vaughan 2006, 64). However, no example of the handwriting of civil servants such as Bernard Hampton, Edmund Tremayne (who had spent a year in Italy), Robert Beale, Thomas Wilkes, Henry Cheke (both of whom had certainly a working knowledge of Italian), William Waad, Anthony Ashley, Daniel Rogers, Thomas Smith (the future Secretary of State, who had earned his degree from Padua), another man of this name,<sup>15</sup> or Thomas Edmond (later Secretary of the French Tongue), has been identified in the forty-eight known surviving specimens (which include drafts, copies and sent versions) of Italian correspondence examined in the course of this research. Among the other members of the Elizabethan 'Foreign Office', the clerks of the signet, which included men of significant expertise in the writing of official correspondence such as Thomas Lake (nicknamed 'Swiftsure' for his ability to speedily dispatch with business)

and Nicholas Faunt (the author of the *Discourse Touching the Office of Principal Secretary of State*, 1592), only the hand of Thomas Windebanke was identified in documents connected to the Italian letters (albeit, as will be shown below, in what appears to be an early English draft).<sup>16</sup>

Walsingham, Burghley and Robert Cecil (who *de facto* took over his father's job after his death) employed a large number of persons to deal with the enormous amount of paperwork which their respective position and status entailed. As his servants Michael Hicks, Vincent Skinner and Henry Maynard knew only too well, Burghley alone received hundreds of letters from petitioners every week, in addition to the burden of the foreign and home affairs he would have been required to deal with (cf. Alford 2008, 305 and *passim*).<sup>17</sup> In fact, the Secretaries' private collaborators were, as Platt (1994) has shown, a sort of unofficial appendix to the 'Foreign Office' staff. Quite importantly, the difference between the official and unofficial members of this group was sometimes blurred by the fact that some of the Council and signet clerks were either former, current or soon-to-be employees – and even, sometimes, relatives – of Burghley (e.g., Bernard Hampton was his secretary, and Henry Cheke his nephew) and Walsingham (Faunt had been in his service since 1578 and after his master's death was employed by Cecil; Lake was taken on in 1584 and became a clerk five years later; Edmondson was employed to assist Sir Francis in making ciphers in 1589 and may have later worked for Robert Cecil; Beale served as secretary and later became a kinsman of Walsingham's through marriage with the latter's sister in law).<sup>18</sup> It is no surprise, then, to find that a draft letter from Elizabeth to Don Antonio of Portugal, written in 1580 by an unidentified amanuensis, presents a subscription in what could be the hand of Lisle Cave, and was endorsed by Lawrence Tomson, both private secretaries to Walsingham (SP 89/1, fol. 134 r-v).<sup>19</sup>

In many respects, these men were not merely 'living pen[s]' (Goldberg 1990, 265). Beale (himself the author of an account of the secretarial mission and tasks),<sup>20</sup> Faunt, and Robert Cecil all emphasise how the main office of the man serving the Principal Secretary should rest, as Sir Robert stated, in 'trust and fidelitie', and in his being a 'keeper or conserver of the secret unto him committed' (266). Sometimes, though, the duty went far beyond that of being a mere recorder. Bernard Hampton was not only asked by William Cecil to produce fair copies out of his notes of restricted meetings of the Privy Council; he was 'a key draughtsman in the delicate relationship between Queen and Council in the parliamentary session of 1566, and he worked on some political papers which can only be described as private Cecil projects' (Alford 1998, 11).<sup>21</sup> An experienced diplomat such as Beale was allowed to act as State Secretary during Walsingham's absence from England in 1583, and Sir Thomas Smith went on to occupy this post after having previously served as a clerk (Kouri 1982, 15; Vaughan 2006, 21-23).<sup>22</sup> When collaborators of this stature, serving either in the Principal or the Latin secretariat, happened to be skilled in foreign languages, such knowledge would have been put to good use. As Vaughan notes, 'clerks like

Edmondès with extensive experience in a single country [France], or like William Waad who served in virtually every major western European country, became expert diplomats abroad, and continued to serve the Privy Council as envoys abroad and specialists at home throughout their tenures as clerks of the Council' (2006, 79).<sup>23</sup> One cannot exclude *a priori*, then, that many (visible) hands and a number of (unseen) heads collaborated in producing the Italian missives.

It should be noted, however, that the physical production of these documents was apparently not something which anybody who 'had Italian' could participate in. In fact, where one might expect to find the handwriting of some of the Italian figures gravitating around the Elizabethan court (such as the writing master Petruccio Ubaldini, Elizabeth's Italian teacher Giovan Battista Castiglione, the regius professor of law at Oxford Alberico Gentili, or less known figures such as the royal physician Giulio Borgarucci, the grammarian Alessandro Citolini, Elizabeth's envoy Guido Cavalcanti, or even some of the members of the Lupo family, the court musicians) one finds only, as will be seen below, the hand of the merchant and diplomat Horatio Palavicino.<sup>24</sup> Most of the 'Italian' scribes remain anonymous; on the other hand, as seen above, their links with the inner circle of the court employees are quite evident.

As regards the concrete act of collaboration between 'hands' and 'heads', some distinction can be made between the different phases of the material process of letter writing, which clearly entailed different skills. Scribe 'B' was evidently a trusted collaborator of Sir John Wolley: it is his hand, in fact, which appears in the Latin Secretary's letter-book (Cambridge University Library Dd 3.20).<sup>25</sup> Frequently employed to copy out letters in Latin, 'B' was also occasionally employed for Italian texts (see e.g. Folger Shakespeare Library MS X.d.138 [4-5], two beautiful examples of sent letters signed by Elizabeth, one of which is reproduced here as fig. 2a-2b). This hand, though, does not appear in any of the drafts related to the early phases of composition and revision of any known Italian letter. That this man's proficiency in the language was, in fact, far from perfect, is evidenced by the number of significant mistakes which can be found in his transcriptions in the Cambridge letter-book. His style, however, was evidently considered more than adequate for official letters, and for keeping a record of them.<sup>26</sup> The case of 'B' not only shows, again, that not all of the scribes working for the Latin Secretariat – no matter how trusted they were as collaborators – were involved in the various phases of the composition and revision (and/or translation) of the royal letters. It also suggests that some of these men, professionals trained to copy out what was set in front of them with what we could today call photostatic precision, were employed only for the final versions to be sent, irrespective of their proficiency in Italian. The initial drafting, and possibly even the early copying of the drafts, however, was entrusted to people who had significant proficiency in this language. The absence of Italian letters in Ascham's hand might be the result of such a division of the labour, or simply be due to the fact that during his term of office the only occasion which may

have required the use of this language – the complicated marriage negotiations with Maximilian II of the mid-1560s – also required the employment of a significantly more authorial hand, that of the Queen herself.

Some other issues related to collaboration can be surmised from the textual vicissitudes through which some of these letters went. In the case of the 1594 letter to Don Antonio, the text scribe 'A' copied on SP 89/2, fol. 219 evidently originated from an English document, still visible on the preceding folio (fig. 5). One would be more inclined to consider this as a set of notes rather than a real 'draft letter': the state of some of these lines is tormented indeed:

as for this young Prince the

Lastly, this bearer her *Majestie* can not but giue him his <sup>due</sup> meri<t>  
in that she awowith he hath governed himself very honorably  
of him the father in respect therof

euer since ~~the~~ the fathers *departinge* hence And so doth recomende  
and of that his good toward hyme she hath taken cause to comm-occasion to  
to imparte commit <sup>certain</sup> som thing by word of mouth vnto him, wch she doubteth not

him the sonne vnto the Louinge fathere. Vnto both whom we  
but hee will deliure as well as any elder. one of more We praye

the remembrance of the Marinare she wisshith all prosperitie and  
yeeres, wherby A wherby he being the roote of the branche  
good

may very Iustly *conseaue* hope off very good fruite, And for suche a one  
her *majestie* doth recomende him to such a father vnto whom and  
she wishith all prosperitie and good successe, as in their meaning  
We have committed certain thinges to by word off mouth vnto this  
one Prince may wish as any other

your yong sonne, wiche we doubt not but he will deliure as  
aptilly as an elder.

As an analysis of the handwriting has confirmed, this text was written by Elizabeth's trusted private secretary, Thomas Windebanke. As mentioned above, the latter had taken down most of Elizabeth's translation of Boethius, which she dictated to him at a tremendous pace between 10 October and 8 November 1593. It took less than a month for this work to be translated, a *tour de force* which resulted in Windebanke becoming one of the best reporters of Elizabeth's words.<sup>27</sup>

The various layers of text set out in the lines presented above seem to bear witness to the fact that these lines are the result of a collation of notes taken at dictation together with a number of subsequent revisions. The use of 'We' in 'We praye the remembrance of the Marinare' is significant in this respect. While the third person is used elsewhere, the royal plural is here associated with a figure which was certainly familiar to Elizabeth, and she certainly meant to allude to it. It came from a very personal holograph, an extravagant, half-Portuguese half-Italian letter to the Queen – addressed as 'bella amichevole molinara del mio core' – which Don Antonio had signed 'Il Marinaro' (CP 185/130). There seems to be little reason

to doubt that the source of these lines was, at least in part, the English monarch herself, which is also supported by Elizabeth's characteristic use of metaphors ('roote of the branche'; 'may very lustly conseau hope off very good fruite').

Permitting a secretary to draft a letter from what amounted to little more than a set of notes was not an uncommon procedure in the Renaissance. It is not, in fact, dissimilar from the one described by Henry Cuffe, the Earl of Essex's secretary, when producing a tract recording a military expedition. Cuffe remembers having first received 'his Lordship's Large [that is, general] enstructions' for this text, then having proceeded to pen 'very truly' a first draft, drawing 'on my owne knowledge' of the events, adding 'sundry particulars of the moment' that the Earl provided. Later

after I had penned it as plainly as I might altering little or nothing of his owne drawght, I caused his Lordship to *peruse* it on[c]e againe and to adde [further parts or corrections] extremam manum. (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 658, fol. 88; Wolfe and Stewart 2004, 55)

Interestingly, the passages connected with the Mariner and the metaphor relating to the tree and its fruits are found at various points in the text of each of the three Italian draft versions, which indicates that these were far from being mere translations. It seems, in fact, that the letter was subjected to revision by a reader who was very attentive to such details. One wonders if the Queen herself did not want to go over her text again and again. Robert Beale had clearly experience of this; in his treatise he encouraged would-be secretaries:

Be not dismayed with the controlments and amendments of such things which you shall have done, for you shall have to do with a princess of great wisdom, learning and experience... The princes themselves know best their own meaning and there must be time and experience to acquaint them with their humours before a man can do any acceptable service. (Read 1925, I, 439)

### 5. *Heads and Hands Penning Trouble*

Men like Beale and Windebanke were clearly much more than mere executors. One would wish to know more not only about these royal secretaries, but also about those assistants who were helping to pen the letters they collaborated in composing. Unfortunately, as Elton once observed, while the handwriting of the civil servants of the Tudor era is 'quite familiar', even when 'we know a name, we cannot assign a hand, and familiar hands have no known owners' (1959, 304). In the course of this research, however, material evidence (which may include endorsements, notes, or corrections sometimes associated with other features such as seals and watermarks), has often been found that links the various states of the Italian missives to a specific entourage. What such evidence tells us is that the drafting and final copying of the Italian letters seem to have

quite frequently been the result of the active cooperation of the offices of the Principal and the Latin Secretary, with occasional assistance from other people who, like John James or Windebanke, were trusted court employees. Even if we should probably interpret 'office' *latu sensu* (to possibly include, that is, some of the personal collaborators working in these secretariats) it is clear, however, that the production remained nevertheless within a restricted circle of men often working within the precincts of the court and/or the private rooms (which could technically be 'at court' during the numerous progresses of the Queen; cf. Cole, 2007) of the Secretary of State and the Latin Tongue.<sup>28</sup>

Intriguingly, the lack of a link between such a context and the extant Italian missives, almost invariably, signals trouble. A draft letter to the Doge of Venice now in the Cecil Papers 153/64 (1-2), datable around 1560-1561, is neither in Ascham's hand nor in that of his anonymous collaborator who copied some of the items in his letterbooks now preserved in the British Library (Add MS 35840 and Royal 13b I). It is quite probable, given the style and the spelling, that both of the versions of the Cecil Papers missive were penned by a native speaker from Northern Italy. Apparently, this is just a typical letter of introduction for the new English envoy, one Marcantonio Erizzo. The letter mentions one apparently minor problem: the man in question is 'an exile', and would therefore need a pardon to return to his native lands. An analysis of contemporary documents reveals, in fact, that Erizzo was quite probably a former English spy, who had been convicted of murder (he had killed his uncle) and had managed to escape from the Venetian prisons. The Venetian government had certainly sufficient motives to consider Marcantonio a *persona non grata*. In fact, the reason why he wanted to go to Italy was that he had promised to provide the English State with a large quantity of bowstaves, bows, brimstone and saltpeter from Naples, all at a very reasonable price (cf. SP 70/24, fols. 3-5; SP 12/16 fol. 77; see also Cressy 2013, 51). Unsurprisingly, the letter is not to be found in the Venetian archives, and was probably never sent.

A rather different case is that of a signed letter to the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1592, in which Elizabeth asked Ferdinando I to suppress a book which, she claimed, offended her and the memory of her mother and father. She consequently demanded that its author, a friar of the Santa Maria Novella convent, be punished (cf. Wyatt 2005, 260-261). The book in question, *Historia ecclesiastica della rivoluzione d'Inghilterra*, was in fact printed in Florence (and later Bologna) in 1591, and was reprinted in 1594 in Rome.<sup>29</sup> What has not been hitherto noticed is that the letter is in the hand of Horatio Palavicino, the Genoese merchant who played a major role as Elizabeth's financial agent in the negotiations with the contemporary European powers between the 1580s and the early 1590s.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding his diplomatic appointments and his being on good terms with Burghley, Palavicino is not known to have ever been directly involved in the work of the Elizabethan 'Foreign Office' either prior to or following this instance. In 1591, however, he was asked to produce an Italian version (Mediceo del Principato 4183, fols. 30-31,

an adaptation rather than a mere translation) of a missive which Burghley had drafted in English (now SP 98/1, fols. 72-74).

What the material evidence of these letters tells us is that, depending on the specific case, when matters were potentially quite delicate and complicated, specific expertise could be sought after. A man from Northern Italy (even if not necessarily from Venice) was consulted in an attempt to identify the most appropriate tone and perhaps calligraphy to communicate with the Venetians in relation to the Erizzo *affaire*. Similarly, Palavicino was evidently believed to be a man capable of finding the right tone to translate a rather delicate missive, one which was implicitly asking the Duke of Florence to take the side of those who, even if indirectly, were against the Church of Rome.<sup>31</sup>

Both the presence of 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar' hands, then, indicate specific choices of collaborators, who were frequently (but not necessarily always, as witnessed in the case of scribe 'B' above) chosen not only for their calligraphic skills, but in all likelihood also for their linguistic abilities. When penning the words of the Queen, heads appear to have counted as much, and possibly even more, than hands.

#### 6. *Authorship Issues and the Italian Letters*

That considerable attention was devoted to the choice of collaborators locates the production of royal letters in a context nearer to an Eliotian 'each man to his job' than to a postmodern dream of collective 'co-creation'. As noted above, even when we cannot always identify a scribe, the material evidence of the Italian letters demonstrates that while, occasionally, *ad hoc* 'consultants' were called in, the Queen's Italian correspondence was generally kept within a circle of trusted civil servants. As the series of notes and amended drafts for the Don Antonio letter reveals, these were men who, just as Beale had emphasised, were used to interpreting their masters' will, and ready to amend their texts at any stage.

Certainly, though, one should not disregard or minimise the 'social' nature of these texts, which is endemic in diplomatic correspondence: various individuals contributed to the production of the royal letters, and one cannot but acknowledge the existence of different layers of authority in them. Traces of the authorial presence can sometimes be detected in specific details of language and style; the elusive nature of internal evidence, however, suggests considering such proof irrefutable only when it comes in tandem with material elements. At the simplest level, for example, the queen's explicit approval of a letter may be glimpsed by the addition of a holograph final salutation in the original; should Elizabeth's typical use of metaphor be identified in the text, this would arguably be evidence, at the very least, of her intervention in the composition or correction of the missive. One should note, though, that other codes, apart from the purely linguistic, were occasionally employed in the Italian letters sent to foreign princes. The letters sent to the Doge and Signory of Venice in the

1580s, for example, imitate, and quite probably were meant to compete with, a formal Venetian *lettera ducale*, an official missive from the Doge (cf. e.g. SP 70/105, fol. 186; fig. 6a). One should not underestimate the visual impact that a letter such as the one reproduced here as figure 6b (sent in 1582) could have had on the ruling elite of the Venetian Republic. *In Senatu senator, in foro civis, in habitu princeps*, as the common saying went, by the late sixteenth century the Doge enjoyed only limited power. Any letters addressed to him were opened in public, in front of the Senate or in the presence of a small number of councillors (cf. Da Mosto 1937-1940, I, 16 and 1960). Elizabeth's message, then, far from being a private communication between heads of state, was in itself a powerful display of intercultural awareness, and an explicit assertion of willingness to negotiate.

Interestingly, the 1582 missive to Venice presents a rather elaborate lengthy sentence in the last paragraph, immediately preceding the final salutation:

Quanto poi concerne l'antica, et stretta amicitia tra i Nostri Regni, Et la Vostra Repubblica: Vi assicuriamo, che nessuno de i nostri predecessori ha piu desiderato la continuation d'essa, che Noi; si per il rispetto dell'affettione, che portiamo generalmente à tutti quei della natione Italiana, Et si particolarmente della Vostra Inclita Repubblica. (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Collegio, Lettere principi 33, fol. 7)<sup>32</sup>

This letter is particularly emphatic in its stress of the bonds of affection which bind Elizabeth and Italy in general and the Queen to the *Serenissima Repubblica* in particular. These were significant words for a monarch: they were clearly meant to have a very powerful rhetorical effect – an effect matched only by the stunning dimensions and elaborateness of the letter. All this could hardly have been achieved without the Queen's consent and active participation.

In the case of the non-holograph letters, as Rayne Allinson has observed, "The work of any number of unseen "authors" could lie behind the royal "we" (2012, 27). The royal signature, when combined with other significant verbal and non-verbal elements, brought together such often collective endeavours, unifying them in an act of authorial approval. Such sanctioning of collaboration was by no means unnatural or artificial. Elizabeth cared about her Italian correspondence, and on a number of occasions chose this language when writing to non-Italians as if it represented a neutral territory on which to meet a foreign ruler. As in real life, when an important visitor came to court, such meetings had to be prepared very attentively if a successful outcome was to be achieved, and such preparation required the assistance of many hands. In the end, though, it was the Queen one met. Something quite similar happened with her letters. The challenge an editor is faced with when working on Elizabeth's Italian correspondence, then, is that of accepting to deal first with many of her courtiers and servants – as most of her contemporaries had to do – in order to have, eventually, admittance to the presence of the English Gloriana.

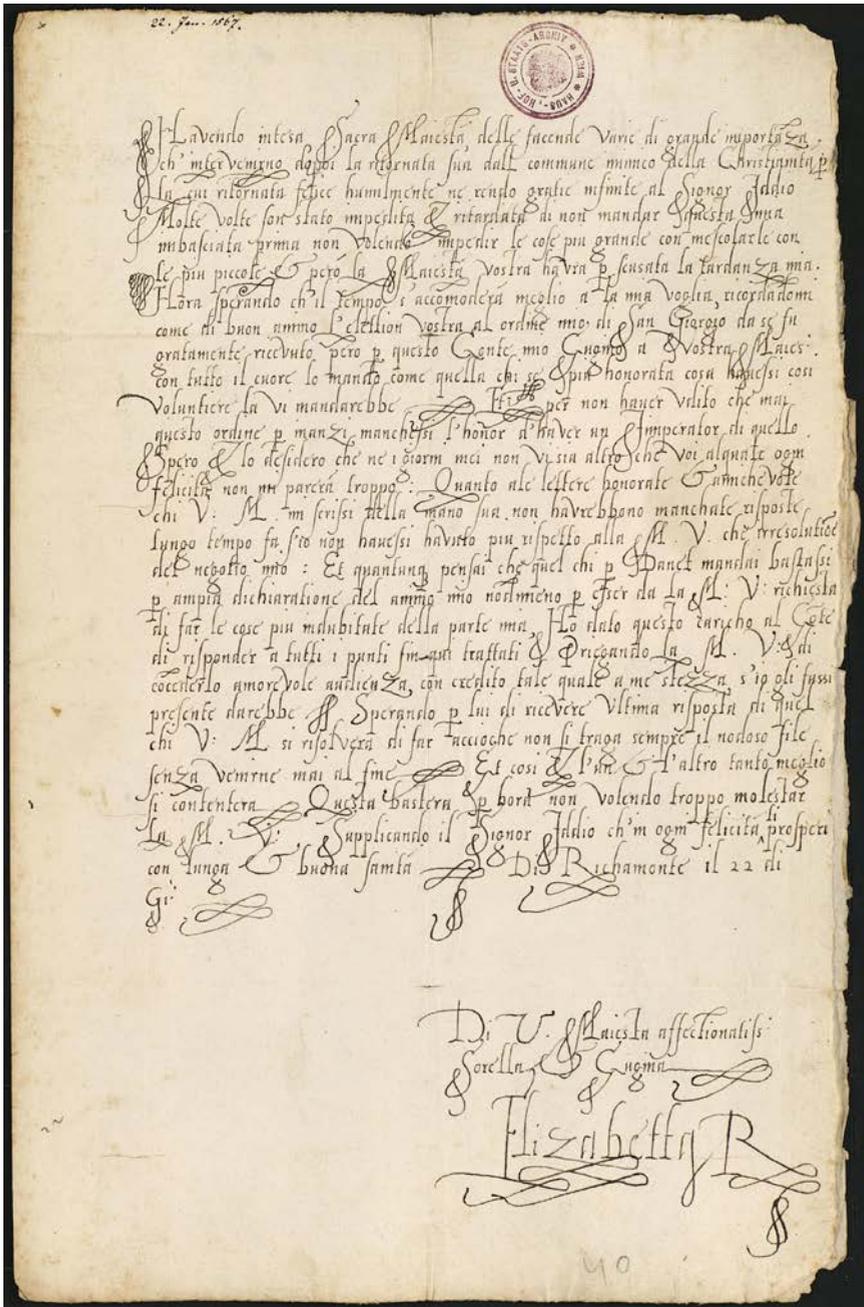


Fig.1 – Queen Elizabeth I's holograph letter to Emperor Maximilian II, 1567  
 (reproduced by permission of the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna)

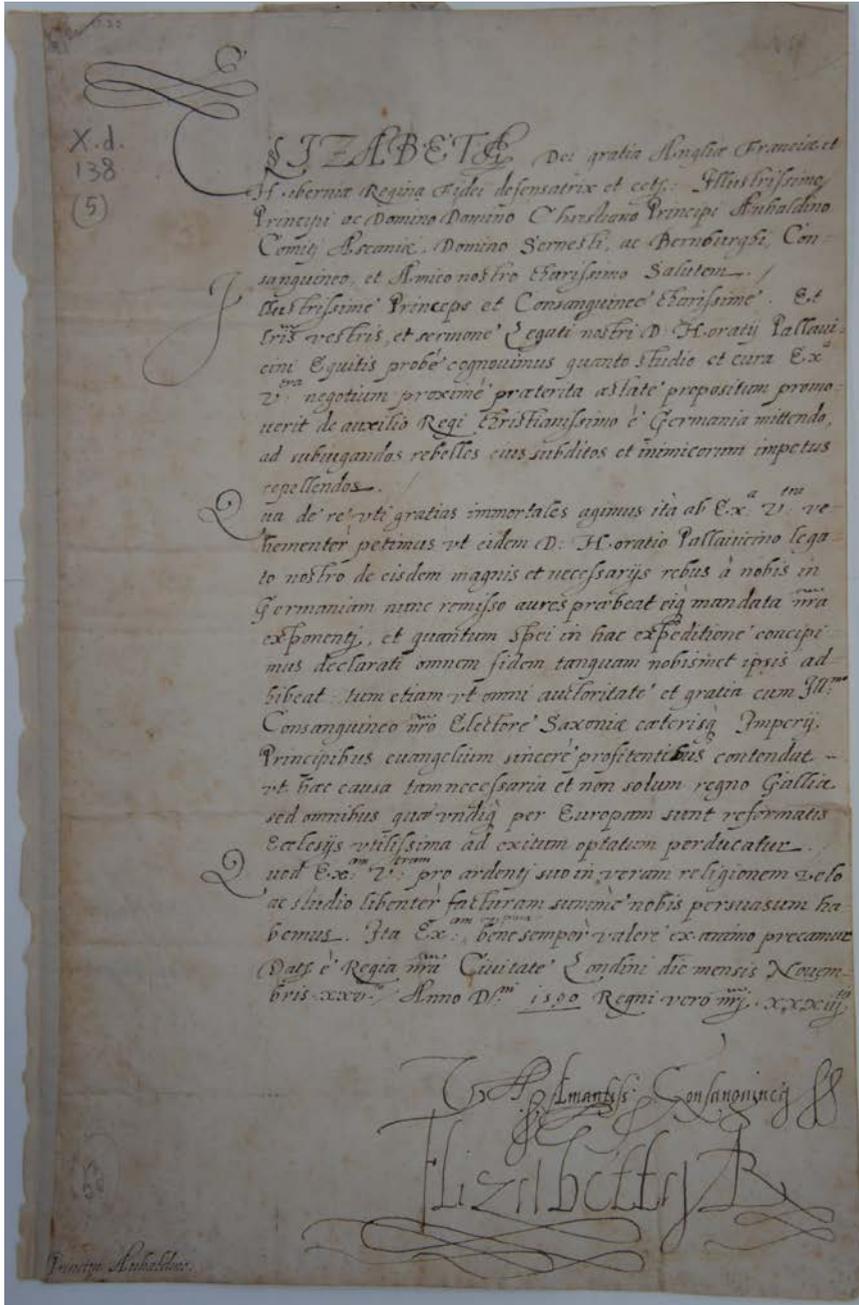


Fig. 2a – Latin letter penned by scribe ‘B’ and signed by Elizabeth with the addition of the signet seal, 1590 (reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington)

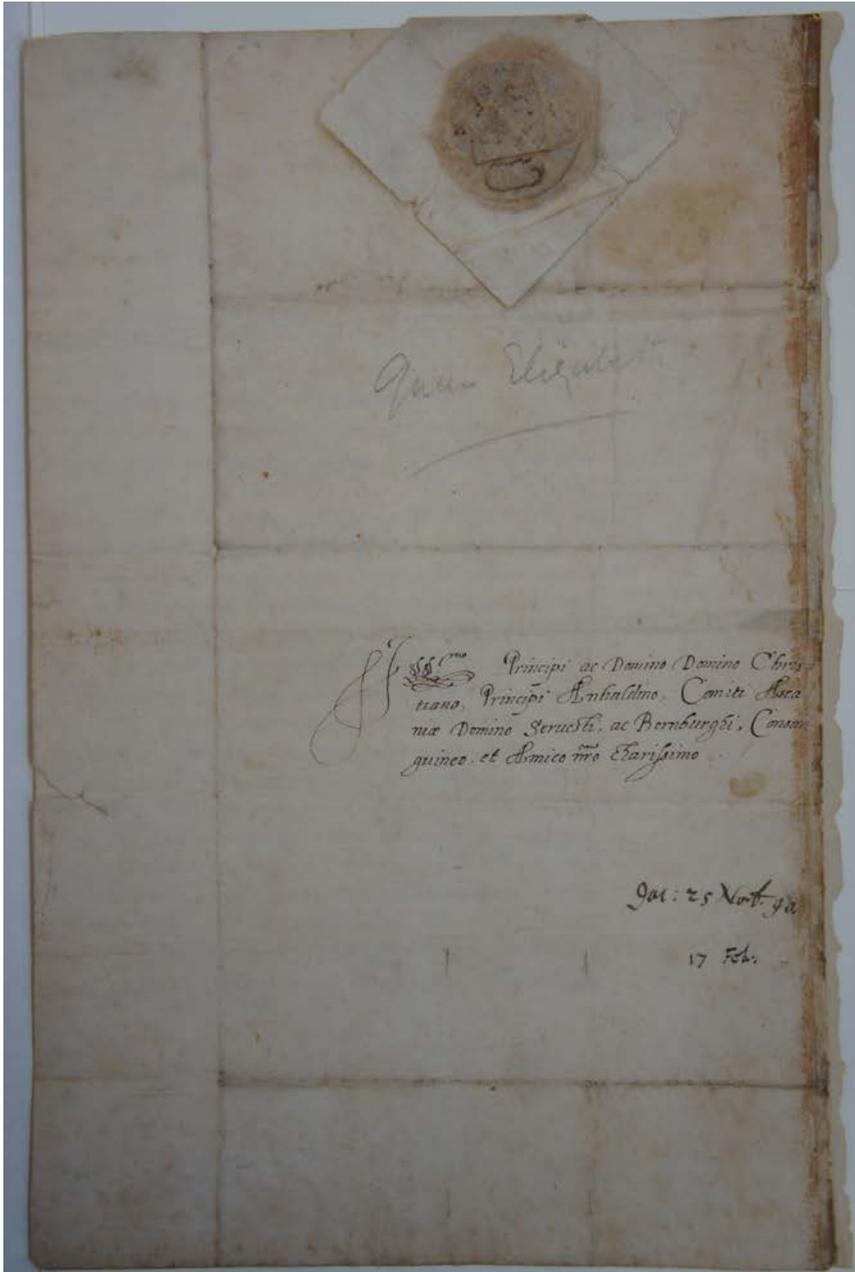


Fig. 2b – Latin letter penned by scribe 'B' and signed by Elizabeth (verso, showing the signet seal)

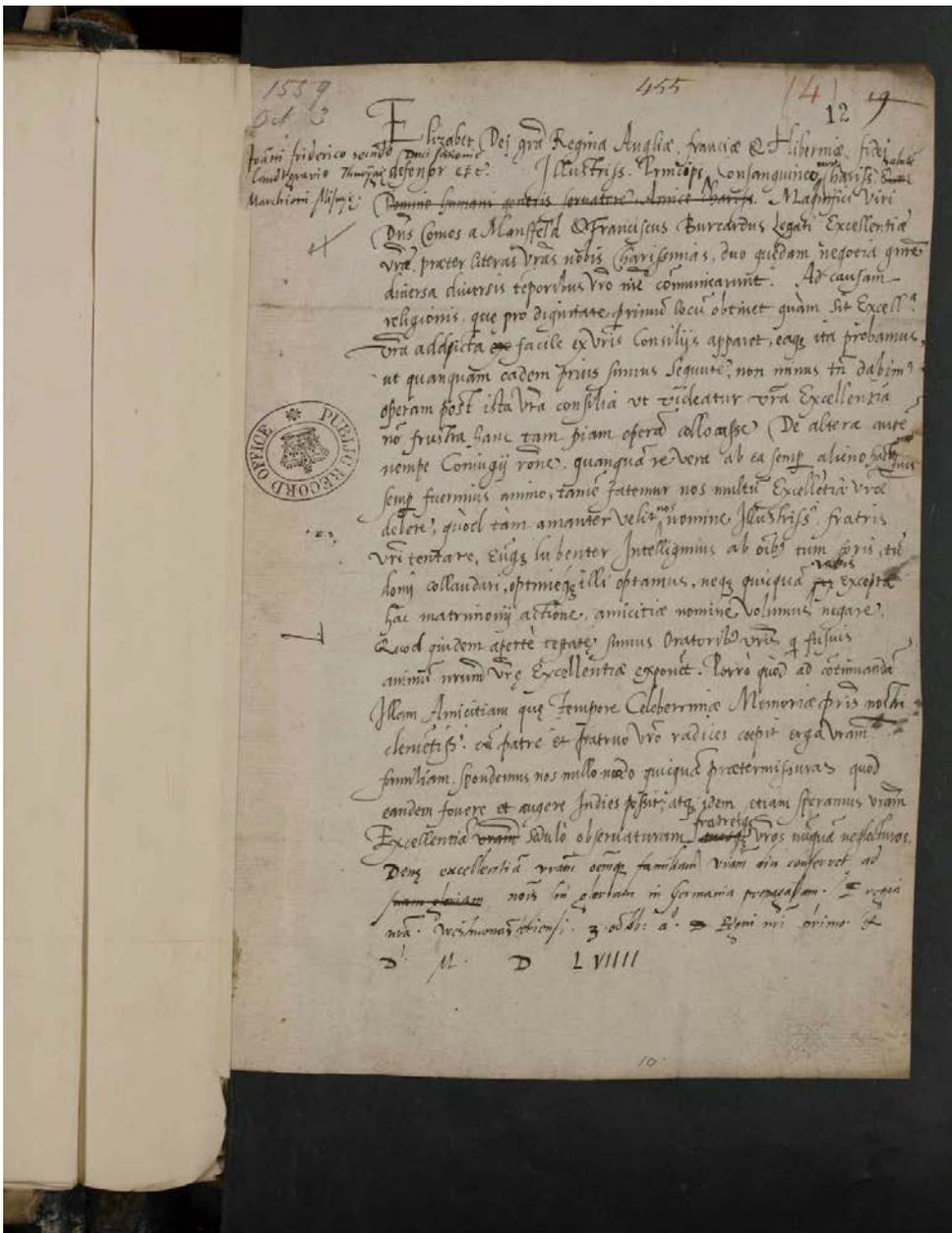


Fig. 3 – Draft of a letter to John Frederic II, Duke of Saxony, showing Cecil’s holograph additions (reproduced by permission of the National Archives, Kew)

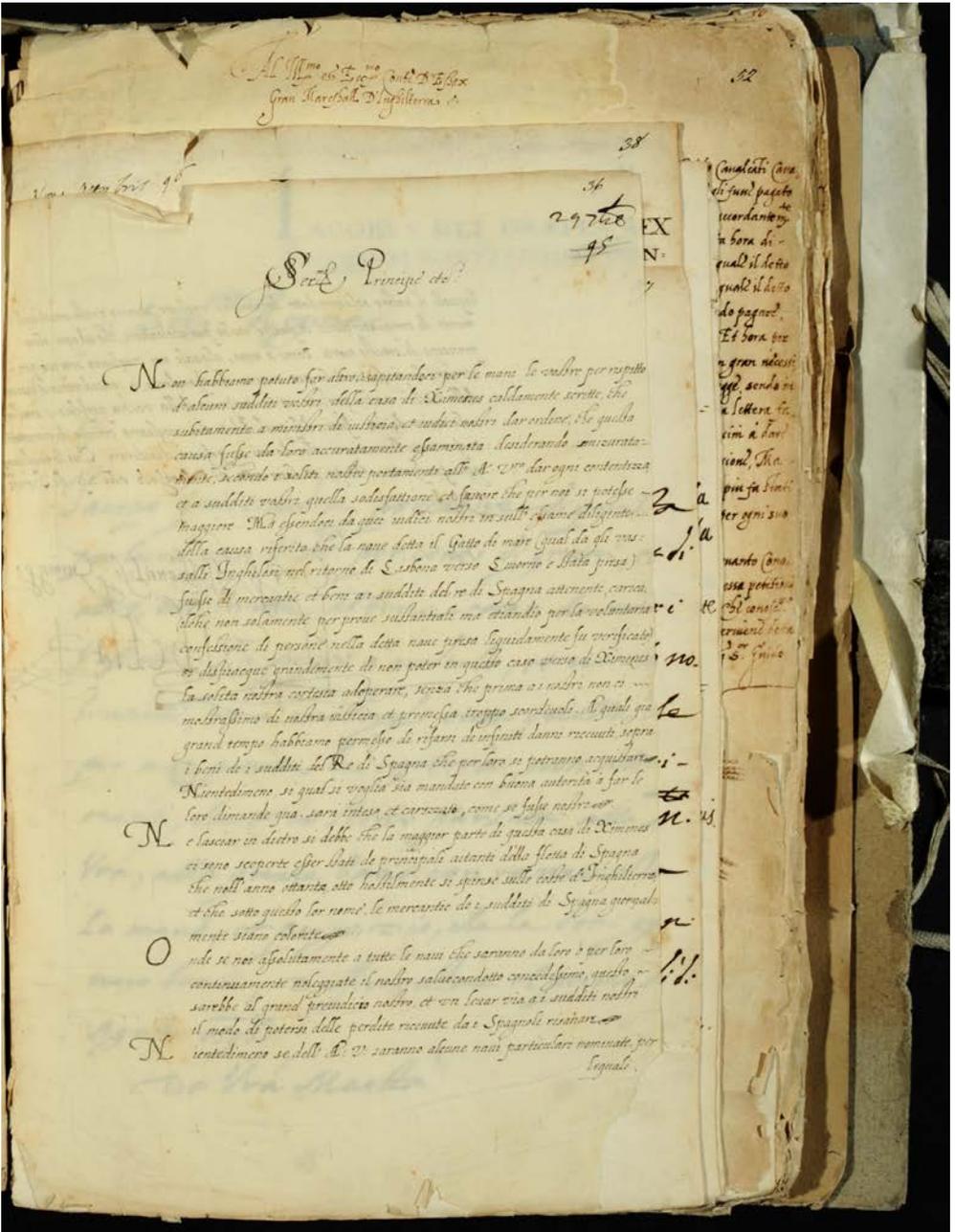


Fig. 4a – Letter to Ferdinando I of Tuscany penned by scribe ‘B’ and signed by Elizabeth (reproduced by permission of the Italian Ministero dei Beni Culturali)

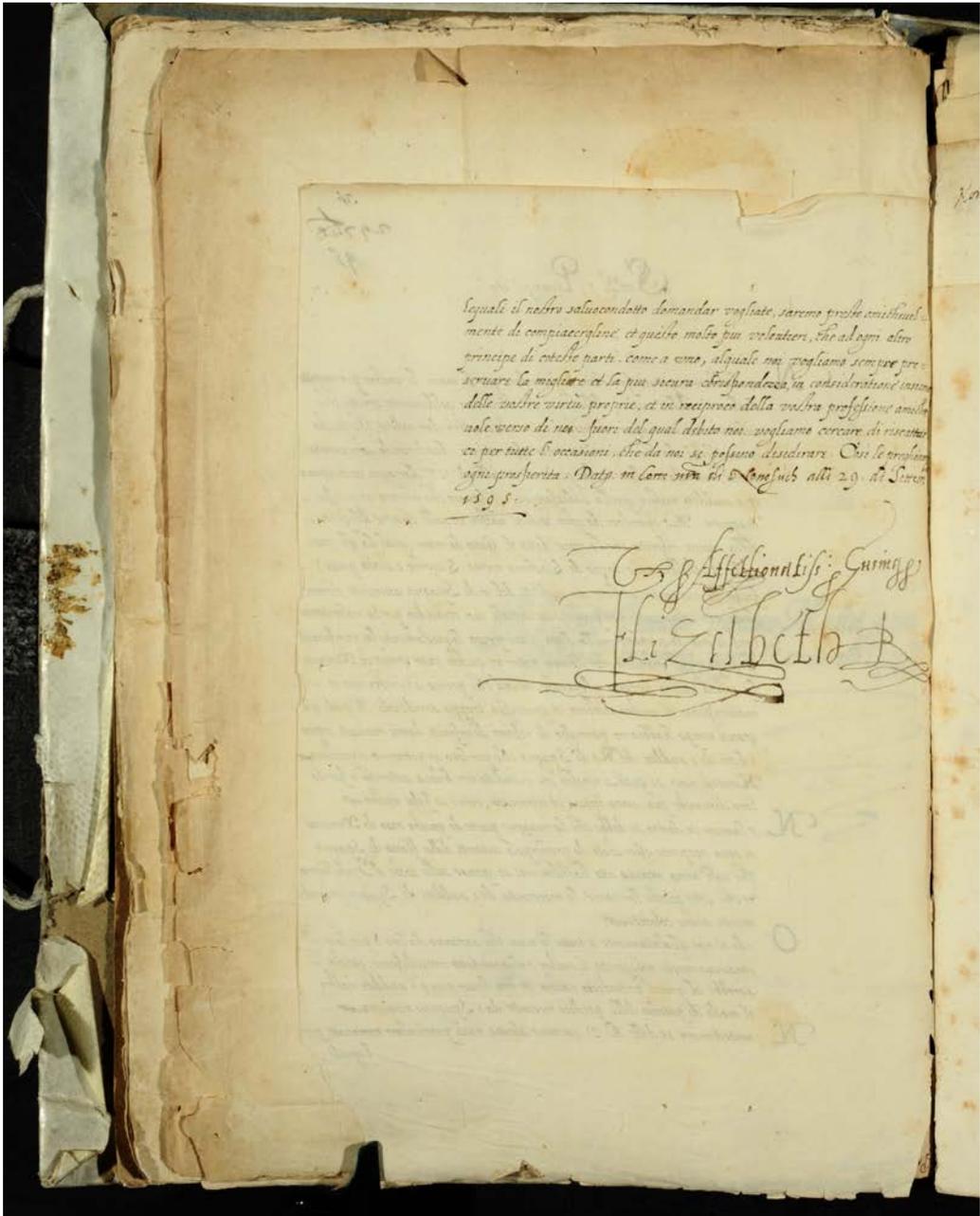


Fig. 4b – Letter to Ferdinando I of Tuscany penned by scribe ‘B’  
(verso, showing Elizabeth’s signature)

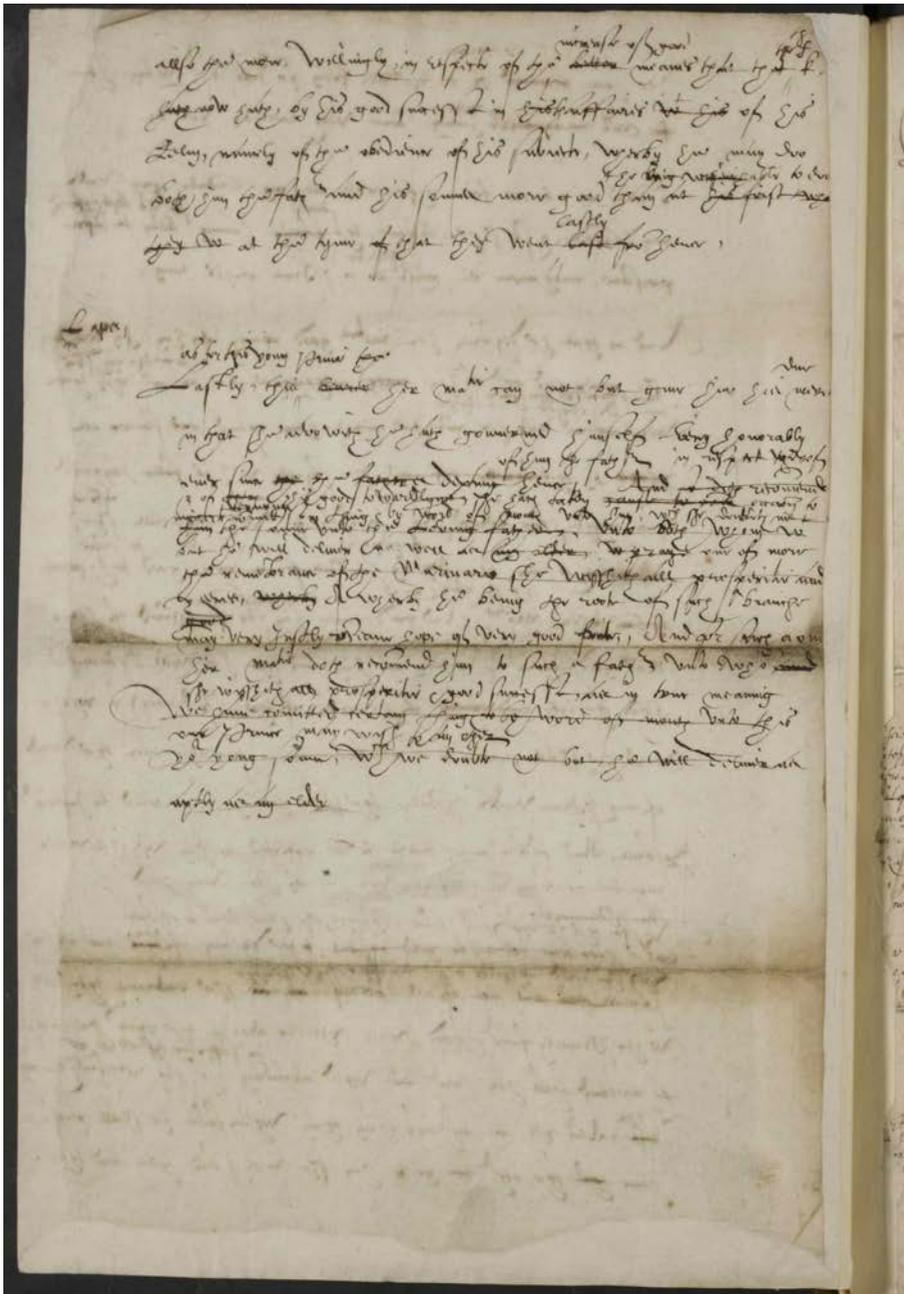


Fig. 5 – Windebanke’s notes for and scribe ‘A’'s version of a letter to Don Antonio of Portugal, 1594 (reproduced by permission of the National Archives, Kew)



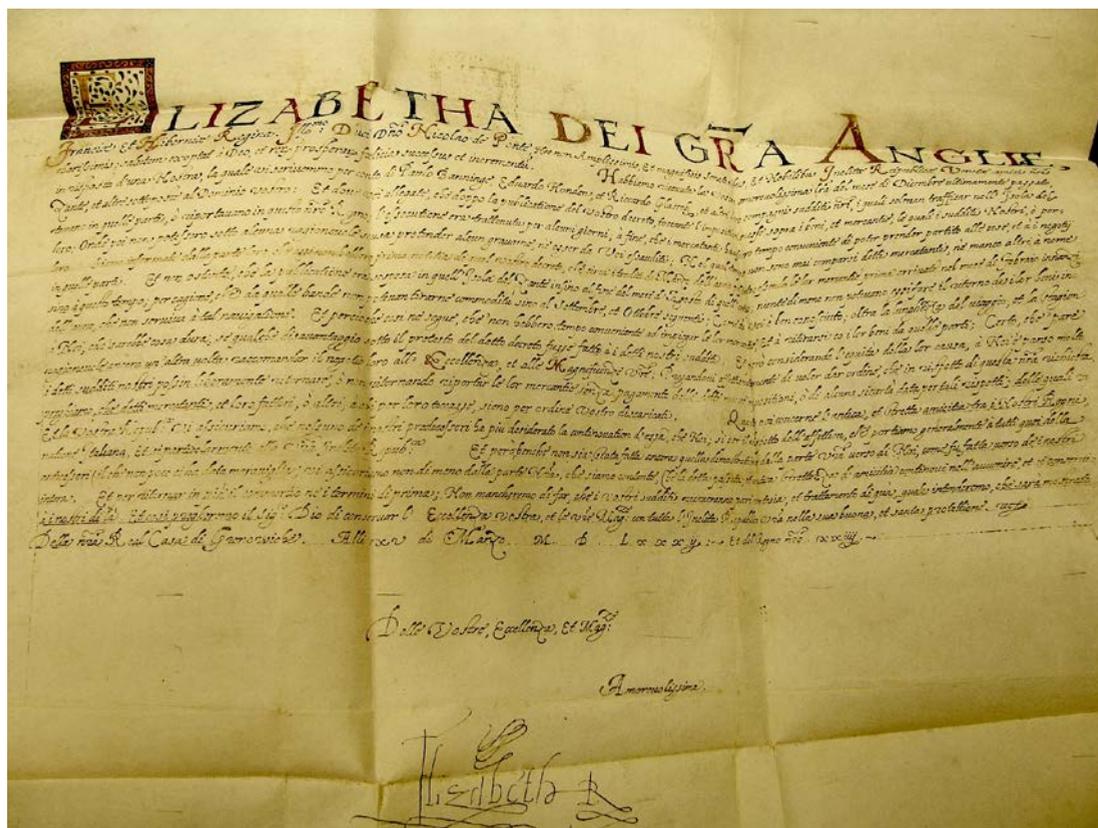


Fig. 6b – Letter to the Doge and Signory of Venice penned by scribe ‘C’ and signed by Elizabeth, 1582 (Collegio, Lettere Principi, filza 33, fol. 7; reproduced by permission of the Italian Ministero dei Beni Culturali; Archivio di Stato di Venezia, atto di concessione n. 60/2013)

<sup>1</sup> Some sections of this article were delivered as papers at University College, London, in July and September 2011, and at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, in June 2012. A fellowship at the latter institution during the summer of 2012 allowed me not only to consult some of the manuscripts quoted here, but also offered an extraordinary experience for frequent discussions with other scholars, including Andy Boyle, Alan Bryson, Carole Levin and Heather Wolfe, and an occasion to meet (or meet again) with others such as Steven May and Jane Lawson. I am most grateful to all of them for their advice, suggestions, and encouragement.

On these letters see Bajetta, Coatalen and Gibson, forthcoming; see also Giuliana Iannaccaro and Alessandra Petrina’s contribution in the present volume.

<sup>2</sup> This manuscript is now Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fol. 40. Elizabeth may have had these texts revised by Roger Ascham or William Cecil, who added the date in the final version of the first letter quoted here; see Bajetta, forthcoming. On Elizabeth’s early handwriting see Woudhuysen 2007 and Gibson 2011; on her use of rhetoric in these letters see Iannaccaro, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. SP 70/5, fol. 7; Folger X d 138 items 1-2. See also Kouri 1982, 13. Ascham's register for the ten years he served as Latin Secretary to Elizabeth is now British Library (henceforth 'BL') Royal MS 13 B I. This manuscript presents both holograph transcripts and a number of copies in other hands; see Ryan 1963, 327. A list of the letters written to the European heads of State is in BL Lansdowne MS 98, fol. 102.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of Wolley's hand (which Kouri, 1982, 14, believes, erroneously, to be that in Cambridge University Library MS Dd 3.20) see e.g. BL Cotton Caligula C VIII, fol. 220; Lansdowne 18/64, 23/69 and 61/165. For an example of a final copy produced by one of Wolley's scribes, complete with Elizabeth's signature and her signet seal, see Hatfield (Herts.), Hatfield House, Cecil Papers (hereafter 'CP') 147/82. For further instances of scribal copies written under Wolley's supervision see below.

<sup>5</sup> Wolley, who seems to have enforced the use of this style from the mid-1570s, may have found a model in some of Ascham's letters; see e.g. Sir Roger's holograph file copies in Royal 13 b I, fols. 16-24 and Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fol. 131.

<sup>6</sup> See, however, Parkins' holograph copy of a Latin letter from Elizabeth to Emperor Rudolph II, SP 80/1, fol. 181. Even if acting as Latin Secretary after Wolley's death (Kouri, 1982: 14), Parkins was officially appointed only in 1601. A former Jesuit and a resident in Italy for about three years, Parkins quite probably knew Italian sufficiently well (cf. McCoog 2008). During his tenure, at least six letters in Italian (all extant) were produced. None of the drafts or final copies of these presents, however, his handwriting; two drafts and one sent letter are in the hand of scribe 'A' (see below).

<sup>7</sup> See also Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fols. 124-125, a rare example of a sent letter countersigned by both Ascham and Cecil.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. e.g. the editions of Ascham's 'collected letters', which include more than merely 'familiar' topics (*Disertissimi viri Rogeri Aschami, Angli, Regiae maiestati non ita pridem a Latinis epistolis, familiarium epistolarum libri tres*) published in 1576, 1578, 1581 and 1590 (the latter two with a variant title). See also Elstob 1703; Giles 1864-1865; Vos 1989. No Italian letters are included in another short compilation of letters written by Ascham for Elizabeth now in BL Lansdowne 98 (item 12, fols. 69-102v).

<sup>9</sup> Cecil could certainly read Italian, as witnessed by his numerous endorsements and notes to missives in this language. In the mid-1580s he received a series of letters in Italian connected with the peace negotiations in the Netherlands, which he annotated in his hand; cf. e.g. SP 77/1, fols. 179, 194, 194v. Cf. also MacCaffrey 2008. Ascham's role was evidently quite different during the reign of Mary, when he would be drafting, at times, a significant number of Latin letters in a very limited period of time; cf. Ryan 1963, 204.

<sup>10</sup> See respectively MacCaffrey 2008 and Archer 2008. Interestingly, the only Italian letters composed during Smith's tenure of the secretaryship appear in the letter-book of the Latin Secretary Sir John Wolley (Cambridge University Library, Dd 3.20), who would later actively collaborate with the Cecils; see below.

<sup>11</sup> William Petre, appointed under Mary, was retained as a councillor by Elizabeth. He does not seem, however, to have held any office of state, apart from a brief spell as acting secretary when Cecil was in Scotland in the summer of 1559 (cf. e.g. Evans 1923, 45, 156; Knighton 2011). After Smith's death in 1577, Thomas Wilson (1523/4-1581) was appointed as one of the queen's two principal secretaries. Notwithstanding his good knowledge of Italian (and the existence of holograph letters by him composed in this language connected to his position, cf. e.g. SP 70/141, fol. 121), he seems to have had little role in the writing of the Queen's Italian missives. Possibly this has to be seen in relation to Walsingham's pre-eminence in foreign policy and the typical work division of the Elizabethan secretariat; cf. Evans 1923, 49-50 and Platt 1994, 727.

<sup>12</sup> For a history of the negotiations see van der Essen 1933-1957, V, 85-113; Oosterhoff 1988, 167-169; 171-179. On Graffigna's role in the negotiations with Parma see SP 84/9, fols. 112-113 and Graffigna's account of his interview with the Duke in his letter to Lord Cobham, CP 163/68. See also Parma's letter to Philip II in *Archivo General de Simancas, Secretaría de Estado, Negociación de Flandes*, 590, fol. 47.

<sup>13</sup> These documents will be transcribed *in extenso* in my edition of Elizabeth's Italian letters, which is currently in preparation (Bajetta, ed., forthcoming). On these letters see also Taviner 2000, 169-170.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Platt 1994, 730: 'The secretaries of the French and Latin tongues translated all the Queen's, Council's, and principal secretary's formal foreign correspondence... There four Signet clerks transformed the queen's foreign correspondence and formal instructions to ambassadors into Signet letters'. See also Allinson 2012, 17-35.

<sup>15</sup> See Vaughan 2006, 41-42; 194. A specimen of the handwriting of the second Thomas Smith is visible in CP 46/20.

<sup>16</sup> On the clerks of the Privy Council see Vaughan 2006. For a complete list of their appointments and tenure see *ibid.*, 194-198 and, for a list of both these and of the clerks of the signet, see the on-line publication prepared at the Institute for Historical Research, *Office Holders in Modern Britain*, <<http://www.history.ac.uk/resources/office>> (01/2014). Faunt's discourse is printed in Hughes 1905. On Henry Cheke's travels to Italy and his translation of an Italian work see Bajetta 1997; on Tremayne, Bartlett 2008; on Lake, Lockyer 2008. It is rather unfortunate that for Windebanke one has to turn to the old *DNB* entry.

<sup>17</sup> On Cecil's secretariat and, in particular, Hicks, Skinner and Maynard see Smith 1968 and 1977. A comparison between their surviving holograph documents has failed to associate their hands to Elizabeth's Italian letters.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kouri 1982, 4-5; 12-13; Alford, 1998, 148-156; Bajetta 1997 and 2008; Levin 2008; Vaughan 2006, 43; Bell 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Butler 1904, 442 (that the main body of the text is in Walsingham's hand seems, however, incorrect). On Tomson see MacMahon 2008.

<sup>20</sup> BL Additional MS 48149, fols. 36-96, printed in Read 1925, I, 423-443.

<sup>21</sup> See also Vaughan 2006, 50: 'Had the clerks worked merely as stenographers or secretaries their work experience would have been irrelevant and the position could have been filled by any Oxford or Cambridge graduate. The participation in events and proximity to power of the office itself required the selection of multi-talented clerks, and the importance of their selection and placement is reiterated by the change of clerks after a change of regime'.

<sup>22</sup> As Vaughan notes (2006, 14) 'being clerk did not exclude these men from holding other government positions, frequently including posts outside of England, a situation that... became more frequent during Elizabeth's reign... The clerkship often led to promotion, both in diplomatic office and in central government. This is true of most of the clerks, and holds true even for those who remained clerks until retirement or death'.

<sup>23</sup> Another, earlier, example is that of Hampton, who 'was particularly talented in Spanish and its dialects, because he was noted as a person "well versed in the Spanish tongue" who, along with Armagil Waad, was such a "sufficient Castilian" that he could translate documents from that language. Indeed, Hampton was so talented he served as Spanish secretary to Queen Mary during his clerkship of the Privy Council' (Vaughan 2006, 78).

<sup>24</sup> A comparison has been carried out between the holograph letters of these men (on whose career in England see Wyatt 2005 and Ashbee 2008) and the drafts, duplicates and final copies of the Italian missives; for reasons of space, further details concerning these documents will be made available in my edition of the letters (Bajetta, ed., forthcoming). One may want to remember that John Florio's career at court started in the Jacobean era; cf. Yates 1934, 246 ff.

<sup>25</sup> On this manuscript see Owens 1973-1974. Scribe 'C' could be the person referred to as 'Sir John Wolley's man' in a letter from Thomas Lake to Sir Robert Cecil; Allinson 2012, 39; Andreani 2011, 130-131.

<sup>26</sup>Paradoxically, this scribe's rather mechanical copying may have preserved some elements of a lost original by the Queen: see Bajetta 2013.

<sup>27</sup>Elizabeth began writing the text herself; at book 3 prose 1, however, probably for reasons of time (cf. Mueller and Scodel 2009, 50) she began dictating to Windebanke. On the schedule imposed by such short time see Windebanke's memorandum, which is attached to the original manuscript, SP 12/289, fols. 9-19; cf. also Mueller and Scodel 2009, 49-53. One may also want to remember that Windebanke had collaborated with Wolley between 1587 and 1590, when, during Sir Francis Walsingham's frequent bouts of ill health, the latter had taken on most of the routine work of the office of the Secretary; cf. Parry 2008.

<sup>28</sup>Quite significantly, both the first draft of the missive to Brutti and the 1595 letter to Ferdinando I bear the same Eagle watermark found on Elizabeth's holograph translation of Cicero's *Pro Marcello* (Bodleian Library MS 900, probably written c. 1592; cf. Mueller and Scodel 2009, 3-10); cf. also Woudhuysen, 2007, 27.

<sup>29</sup>The *Historia* derived from *De origine ac progressu schismatis anglicani* (Cologne, 1585) by the English recusant priest Nicholas Sanders, a book which was completed, after Sander's death in 1581, by a fellow recusant cleric, Edward Rishton.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Wyatt 2005, 144-145. See also Archer 2008, and, on Palavicino's missions for the English State, Stone 1956, in particular 98-181. The fact that the Genoese was employed in framing such an important letter may have helped his returning into favour after the unfortunate 1590-1591 mission: in 1594 and in 1598 he exchanged New Year's gifts with the Queen, receiving the same amount of gilt plate as he had received earlier on, when his standing at court was certainly good (*ibid.*, 25-26). See also Lawson 2013.

<sup>31</sup>Even if a native of Genoa, one should add, Palavicino was in a position to have a good understanding of the situation in central Italy and Tuscany in particular as he and his family had been dealing in alum at least from the 1570s until the early 1580s (cf. Stone 1956, 41-64, in particular 47-49; 63).

<sup>32</sup>'For what concerns the ancient and close friendship existing between our Dominions and Your Republic, we assure you that none of our predecessors has desired the continuation of it more than We do; both in respect of the affection we bear to all the people of the Italian nation [i.e., race], and in particular to those of your illustrious Republic' (my translation).

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# To and From the Queen: Modalities of Epistolography in the Correspondence of Elizabeth I

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## *Abstract*

The article analyses the connection between modalities of letter writing and the relation between writer and addressee. We take into consideration the case of Elizabeth I of England, situated in the overall panorama of early modern European historiography. The English Queen was a prolific and skilful letter writer, endowed with an uncommon talent for foreign languages; but she was also, thanks to her role, the willing or unwilling recipient of thousands of epistles. By selecting two different *corpora* of letters, from and to the Queen, it is possible to explore how personal relations, degree of acquaintance, respective status and purpose of the letter influence the very structure of the genre.

*Keywords:* Dedications, Elizabeth I, Epistolography, Rhetoric

## 1. *Elizabeth I and Letter Writing*

Queen Elizabeth I's correspondence is vast and as yet partially unknown; an unexpectedly substantial number of her letters is still unpublished, and, possibly, unread.<sup>1</sup> As frequently happens with documents of heads of state and political leaders, her epistolary exchanges have been partly examined in historical and sociological investigations, since the amount of information provided by letters is invaluable. The beginning of the twenty-first century, though, witnessed a growing consideration for the Queen's epistles as a huge and significant literary corpus worthy of attention, and a number of research studies – both collections and critical essays – have appeared in the last fifteen years.<sup>2</sup> By 'epistolary corpus' we mean her life-long correspondence, which is both private and public, domestic and foreign, holograph and scribal, and written in English as well as in other European languages, such as Latin, French, and Italian. In the case of public authorities it is important to point out that the distinction between public and private letters is very often blurred, and even more so in the early modern

period, when the process of composing, editing, transcribing, and sending a letter involved more than one agent. We should therefore be careful never to take it for granted that an epistle sent by a Renaissance head of State has actually been physically *written* (or even devised, corrected, and amended) by the same person whose signature appears at the bottom of the last page.

Elizabeth is, of course, no exception. Once a queen, she would employ her own hand to get in touch with a chosen number of addressees, and would leave the rest of her correspondence to her secretariat. Whilst studies on the Queen's handwriting have made it possible to identify a good number of holograph letters (no easy task, by the way, since her hand became more and more unreadable with the passing of time),<sup>3</sup> in the case of scribal correspondence the attempt to determine her degree of involvement in the devising and composing of an epistle becomes really arduous. What we can be quite confident about, though, is that Elizabeth always strove to be in control of the multiple activities carried out in her name, and it is therefore quite probable that she would at least revise the correspondence handled by her secretariat, rather than entrusting it completely to her collaborators – be they as competent as William Cecil, her chief advisor and Secretary of State for a long part of her reign. She had risked her life more than once in her youth; her early experiences, added to the danger of being a woman in a world ruled by men, made her extremely careful and suspicious in her dealings with other people: her attempts to keep everything under control, both in the private and in the public sphere, also affected her epistolary exchanges, as we shall see presently.

It is the relatively recent interest in Elizabeth I's letters from a literary perspective that allows for a study not only of the political, historical and sociological aspects of her writings, but also of the stylistic and rhetorical construction of her correspondence. This essay starts from the assumption that there is still a considerable amount of work to be done on the Queen's epistolography, and also that cooperation among scholars from different countries is indispensable to deal with her polyglot achievements. Already as a young princess, Elizabeth disclosed a multilingual inclination she was never to abandon throughout her life, and which proves pivotal in the attempt to perceive the interrelated aspects of her epistolary prose, which are far from negligible.

It is precisely from this perspective that the first part of this essay moves. Since this is not the right place to attempt a more comprehensive treatment of the Queen's epistolary rhetoric, the discussion focuses on her use of one metaphor in particular – the 'metaphor of the scales' – which can be considered a case in point to deal with Elizabeth's prevalently pragmatic use of figurative language in her mature letters. Always in search of effectiveness, this polyglot letter writer would not refrain from employing the same expression at least in three different languages, English, Italian and French, having found it particularly functional to bring home her often multiple meanings. The analysis of this metaphor also tells us something about Elizabeth's recurring attempt to

be in control of the epistolary exchange by fashioning herself as a right and trustful monarch, who can deal properly with public and personal matters just because she can ‘think properly’, that is, rationally. These are the instances in which she has recourse to the metaphor of the scales, which evokes images of balance and equilibrium in order to persuade her reader of the correct (and therefore indisputable) nature of her argumentation.

In the second part of the essay the attention is focused on letters written to the Queen, particularly petitionary letters inserted as dedications to works presented to the monarch. Elizabeth is a very particular case: a highly cultivated and intelligent monarch whose vast body of correspondence has in large part survived. Thus our observations will allow us to explore strategies of epistolary negotiation taking place with the Queen playing the double role of writer and recipient, observing how analogies and similarities in such negotiations could be attributed to contemporary rhetorical practices and to a shared cultural and social background.

## *2. Queen Elizabeth I's Letters: the Metaphor of the Scales*

That Elizabeth wrote letters for the pleasure of writing is no mystery, since she started early, at the age of eleven, and produced an impressive amount of epistles until the end of her life, in spite of a ‘disease in her fingers [which] perhaps helped contribute to the increasingly wild and tottery nature of [her] hand’ (Gibson 2011, 59). That she also learned quite early the importance of being able to communicate clearly, persuasively, and effectively is apparent from the style of the letters in which she addressed Edward Seymour, the Lord Protector, in 1549, during the brief reign of her young brother Edward VI. The sixteen-year-old Princess was then in troubled waters: she was suspected of being involved in the treacherous intrigues of Thomas Seymour against his brother Edward (see MacCaffrey 2004, 9-11), and therefore found herself in life danger. The abrupt change in her correspondence is visible in her letters to Edward Seymour,<sup>4</sup> in which she tries to defend herself against suspicion: her epistolary style passes from the adorned, formal and complimentary letters to the royal members of her family – her stepmother Katherine Parr, her father King Henry VIII, and her half-brother King Edward VI – to plain and straightforward epistles, albeit well-constructed and elegant. Not only is Elizabeth in personal danger, but she is also trying to save the life of the people she loves, her governess Kate Ashley and her cofferer Thomas Parry.

In her letters to the Lord Protector she mainly employs plain syntax, an ordered narration of events, and very few figures of speech; those few are to be found in her longest and most articulate epistle (February 21, 1549), and are, at any rate, functional to the argumentation. The young Princess desperately needs to be clear, effective, and persuasive; at the beginning of the above-mentioned letter, she uses the words ‘plainlie’ and ‘plaine’ three times:

My Lorde hauinge reseuede your Lordeships letters I parceue in them your goodwill towarde me bicause you declare to me plainlie your mynde in this thinge... my mynde was to declare unto you plainlie as I thoght in that thinge wiche I did also the more willingely because (as I write to you) you desired me to be plaine with you in al thinges.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout her argumentation, she carefully alternates between expressing her indignation for being slandered and showing humility; she even attempts to 'manage' her own case by giving advice to the Privy Council on the right way to contain the spreading of evil reports concerning herself. Rather than asking her to denounce the 'evil tongues', it would be much better if the Privy Council showed their concern for the Princess' good name by issuing a proclamation

in to the counntries that the[y] refraine ther tonges declaringe how the tales be but lies it shulde make bothe the people thinke that you and the counsel haue greate regarde that no suche rumors shulde be spreade of anye of the Kinges Maiesties Sisters as I am thought vnwordie. (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 22)

It is worth taking these first persuasive letters into consideration because they introduce some rhetorical features to be found in Elizabeth's more mature epistolography. Along with the use of the readily available 'encoded wisdom' drawn from classical and biblical sources (maxims, *sententiae*, proverbs and *exempla*), at the disposal of all those who had profited from a humanistic education, Elizabeth developed personal strategies of argumentation. These can be partly traced back to her classically grounded eloquence, but are also the outcome of a particularly skilled letter writer, who is determined not to lose ground in the sometimes challenging epistolary battlefield. The above-mentioned balance between humility and a more pugnacious attitude, as well as the habit of taking upon herself the role of advisor – not only towards her subjects or younger correspondents (like James VI of Scotland), but also when writing to foreign ruling powers – are recurring characteristics of her later epistolary style.<sup>6</sup> That Elizabeth was a prolific and skilful writer, that she was able to exploit her outstanding education, that she employed effective rhetorical constructions in order to fashion her own image, is fairly well-trodden ground. In her correspondence, the Queen poses both as the authoritative sovereign and as the affectionate and caring kin (see Mueller 2000 and Allinson 2007); she often plays the role of the wise counsellor (see Crane 1988 and Allinson 2007); she notoriously employs a 'rhetoric of gender', by fashioning herself both as the strong and severe king and as the soft and vulnerable queen. A recurrent feature of her correspondence is also the 'rhetoric of trust', employed, for instance, with Mary Stuart and considerably with James VI of Scotland, in order to set the rules of their relationship: each time, depending on need, advising, warning, chiding and basically reminding them of the danger of betraying her trust and confidence.

Above all, Queen Elizabeth wants to be effective when communicating by letter. She wants to convey her meaning clearly when giving instructions (to the point of being sometimes pedantic and redundant), and she strives to be particularly incisive in her argumentations. In order to be persuasive, she obviously does not disregard the assistance of the art of rhetoric. But since her goal in writing is mainly pragmatic, she generally maintains strong control over her prose, which has to be more communicative than embellished. When she employs elegant rhetorical constructions and figures of speech, she manages to combine effectiveness and ornament, by choosing structures and words apt to convey her meaning powerfully.

The particular metaphor which is the object of the present analysis comes to the Queen's aid several times, and is employed also in languages other than English. It can be expressed in slightly different ways, such as 'to weigh a [certain] matter with an even hand', or 'to weigh matters in equal/right balance', or 'with the right scales'. Its importance is linked to the fact that, by employing it, Elizabeth proposes her arguments as indisputable evidence. Since the scales are the symbol of balance, and therefore of justice, their link with argumentative equilibrium and with sound judgment is also apparent. Having recourse to that metaphor in particular, the Queen means to assert her ability to follow a rational line of reasoning; moreover, by prompting her correspondent to weigh matters correctly, she implicitly states her own superiority in drawing reasonable conclusions from given premises, which is, traditionally, the aim of logic. A 'naturally' less-gifted thinker because a woman, she feels the need to forcefully establish her crucial role in the epistolary exchange, particularly in those cases in which she is corresponding with foreign monarchs inclined to underestimate her. She therefore tends to assert her mental lucidity over her interlocutor, who is consequently urged to recognize the indisputable nature of her arguments.

This is the very context in which the first metaphor of the scales discussed here should be read. In 1566 a relatively young Queen Elizabeth – definitely not in her prime, but still eligible in the European matrimonial market – wrote a letter to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor. The occasion for writing was the protracted marriage negotiations between herself and Charles, Archduke of Austria, the Emperor's younger brother. The Austrian suit was a complex issue, which was taken into consideration intermittently between 1559 and 1567 by a deeply divided Privy Council.<sup>7</sup> It was only in the years 1566-1567, though, that the conditions for the match were actually made clear between the two monarchs involved, namely Elizabeth and Maximilian: they exchanged a couple of holograph letters in which they discussed the specific conditions for stipulating the marriage agreement – only to come, eventually, to the conclusion that the match was unadvisable.<sup>8</sup> The main obstacle for the English Queen, in that particular political juncture, was probably Charles' Catholicism; Maximilian's reiterated request that his brother should be left

free to practice his creed in private did not facilitate the process of finding an acceptable solution to the problem. Yet, there were also financial issues to be settled, in addition to a request on the part of Elizabeth that the Emperor (and/or his brother) did not seem inclined to grant: that the Queen and the Archduke should be able to meet in person before marrying, which meant a preliminary visit to England on the part of Charles, arranged on purpose to know – and to be known by – her.

Be it as it may, negotiations failed towards the end of 1567. Elizabeth's letter discussed here, instead, written in spring 1566, still contemplates the possibility of a marriage agreement. The Queen is displeased with Maximilian's previous missive (written in Spanish in his own hand, and dated 27 November 1565), but she is not yet ready to put an end to negotiations, and therefore manages to find a compromise between giving voice to her disapproval and maintaining decent diplomatic relations with the Austrian household. To Maximilian's epistle written in Spanish she decided to answer in a diplomatic *lingua franca* of her time, Italian, which was well known to be the language of a cultural élite. It is therefore in Italian that she employs the metaphorical expression 'se vi piacerà bilanciar con mano dretta questa causa', which brings the 'scales' ('bilancia' in Italian) into the present discussion.<sup>9</sup>

On a practical level, the Queen is trying to show the Emperor the rightfulness of her plea, which regards the third condition for marrying mentioned above; she deems it indispensable that Charles and herself be able to meet and know each other before the official engagement:

Pare a me che *per* tutti duoi sarebbe il meglio il vedersi[.] Chi sa se a luy piacerà la elettione fatta *per* gli occhi d'altrui. Tot Capita tot sensus[.] Quel chi a vn piace a vn altro non *conviene*. A me toccherebbe la vergonia vualmente con esso luy se la venuta sua fussi indarno... talche se vi pi<sup>a</sup>cerà *bilanciar con* mano dretta questa causa mi pare che tal obiectione di già ha la sua risposta[.]<sup>10</sup>

On the level, instead, of what this argument implies, the communicative strategy is more subtle. Apart from reaching her practical goal, Elizabeth also needs to emphasize her own worth as a 'European' monarch, who deserves that visit, 'not for what I am in myself, but for the honour of the position which I occupy'. In that case, employing a metaphor which, as discussed above, highlights the self-explanatory quality of her line of reasoning, somehow forces her correspondent to recognize that such rational and incontrovertible arguments derive from a fellow monarch endowed with sound judgment and intellectual lucidity.

The metaphor of weighing matters correctly can be also found in a couple of letters in French, where Elizabeth makes a similar appeal on sound judgment. They both concern, once again, the Queen's marriage negotiations with a foreign household, this time the French monarchy. The first attempt to organize a match between Elizabeth and one of the four sons of Henry

II of France and Caterina de' Medici (namely Henry, Duke of Anjou) had already failed by 1572. A much longer life had the second project, which involved Henry's younger brother Francis, Duke of Alençon (later Duke of Anjou, when Henry accessed the throne of France in 1574). In that case, a kind of affection developed on the part of Elizabeth, who corresponded with her approximately twenty-year-younger 'Monsieur' until his death in 1584.

The first of the two French epistles is addressed from Queen Elizabeth to 'Monsieur', and dated circa December 1579 - January 1580. It is a copy, but 'with one (and possibly a second) local insertion in Elizabeth's hand' (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 152, note 1); the Queen, therefore, read and amended the copied version. The metaphor we are discussing can be found in the first part of this relatively long letter, in which Elizabeth is trying to persuade the by then Duke of Anjou of the righteousness of her attitude in front of her subjects' reaction to their projected marriage. Religious practice is once more at stake: unless Anjou renounces his resolution to exercise his (Catholic) religion openly once married, Elizabeth warns him that they will have to abandon the idea of the match altogether, because 'le public exercice de la Relligion Romaine adhere tant en leur coeur que le ne consentirayia mais que uous ueniez entre telle companie de malcontents' (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 152-153).<sup>11</sup> She claims to have made use of 'time' and 'reason' in order to be able to deal with the people's wishes and aversions in the best possible way; she then proceeds by distancing herself from the practice of bad governors, who make 'temeraires iudgements au premier coup, sans auoyr peizé en meilleure balance le fon de leurs opinions' (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 152)<sup>12</sup> – that is, of course, without having duly considered, in a balanced and rational way, the political convenience of their actions.

Although the tone of this letter to Anjou is obviously more intimate than that to be found in the Maximilian epistle, the Queen is once more trying to export an image of herself as a just, rational, and considerate monarch, torn between giving vent to her own passions and desires and being ready, instead, to renounce them out of a profound respect for her people and their opinions.<sup>13</sup> She also shrewdly prompts the Duke to make use of *his* better judgment in evaluating her conduct correctly: 'Te ne doute de comparoistre deuant le siege de uostre droyct iugement pour me quitter de toute cautele ou dissimulation' (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 153).<sup>14</sup> The latter is another recurrent argumentative strategy in Elizabeth's epistles: by flattering her recipients through a commendation of their just and equitable mental attitude, she tries to prevent their potential objections and to bring them to accept her line of reasoning.

The other French example employing the metaphor of the scales is another epistle, this time holograph, addressed to the Duke of Anjou and dated 1581. It is less rhetorically interesting than the first, albeit briefly touching similar issues when the Queen gives voice to her increasing doubts concerning their

marriage; therefore, it will be sufficient to quote the sentence in which Elizabeth employs the metaphor itself to prompt her correspondent to consider matters thoughtfully before taking any course of action: ‘... Nonobstant ne puis faillir d’auoir soing de Vostre grandeur si auant que Vous priettes humblement premier que le faire de poiser en droictes balances quelz accidentz uous en peuvent reuscir Comme en premier lieu Si le mariage n’ensuivit’.<sup>15</sup>

The last example to be discussed here is in English. In March 1586 Elizabeth writes one of her many holographs to her ‘deare brother’ James VI of Scotland; it is, in Janel Mueller’s words, a ‘highly charged, profusely metaphoric letter’ (2000, 1067), which endeavours to warn James of the risk of losing the Queen’s favour and trust without openly accusing him of treacherous designs. The reiterated attempts on the part of France to weaken England by turning Scotland against its neighbour are obvious enough to Elizabeth, who frequently reminds James of their mutual pact of friendship, and wants to be reassured of his loyalty. At the beginning of the letter, she makes use of a widely employed extended metaphor to dissuade James from abandoning the close alliance with England: that of the seaman/ship able to ‘pas the highest bellows without yelding and broke nimlest the roughest stormes...’ (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 62). The Scottish King, that is, had better resist the French financial lures – France had promised to fill James’ coffers in case of an alliance – and keep a straight course, maintaining an ‘irremovable goodwill’ towards the English Queen and her country.

It is not only a question of keeping faith to a promise; pragmatic as she is, Elizabeth highlights the interests at stake when choosing between two alternatives; actually, she employs the word ‘bargain’ when she tries to persuade James not only of the dangers of a broken alliance, but also of the advantages, for his realm, of an untainted friendship with England. It is in this context that she also underlines the rationality of that choice by making use of her beloved metaphor of the scales:

I dare thus boldly affirme that you shall haue the bettar part in this bargain for When you Way in equal balance with no palsey hande the Very ground of ther desires that wold withdrawe you it is but roote of mischif to peril your selfe with out Who to [*sic*] hope to harme her who euer hathe preserved you. (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 62)

France, in other words, is not genuinely interested in a political bond with Scotland. Rather, France’s aim is the weakening of England through the complicity of English neighbours. Enticed by the temptation of money, James’ hand may be wavering when trying to balance the pros and cons of political action, but the English Queen, his ‘dearest sister’ and strongest supporter, is there to render his ‘weighing’ steady and just. Employing, alternatively, the reasons of personal loyalty and those of a more effective *Realpolitik*, Elizabeth once again appeals to her correspondent’s reasoning skills, but at the same time

promotes an image of herself as the just and rational counsellor, who can be of great help thanks to her capacity to think correctly. That she has a lot to teach her nephew on the 'art of thinking' is the implication of an argument constructed by employing effectively the 'art of rhetoric'.

The Queen was to employ the metaphor of the scales over again in her correspondence with James VI. For instance, in her holograph dated 'circa February 1, 1587' she tries to persuade him of the necessity that his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, be kept in her custody instead of being entrusted to the hands of 'some indifferent prince, and haue all her Cousins and allies promis she wyL no more seake my ruine. Deare brother and Cousin Way in true and equal balance Wither the lak not muche good ground whan suche stuf serues for ther bilding' (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 79).

The metaphor of the scales is not only a functional tool in Elizabeth's epistolary exchanges, but it is also, as hinted above, a beloved expression of hers. She employs it in various contexts, and not exclusively to convey the meaning of a decision taken after due consideration. In a holograph letter to James dated August 1588, in the aftermath of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, she warns him of the danger of the Scottish Catholic earls giving aid to some retreating Spanish ships approaching the Scottish coast. Once more trying to steer the course of Scottish politics from abroad, a worried Queen Elizabeth diplomatically takes her leave from a nephew she knows she can never trust entirely; her beloved metaphor assists her in reiterating her affection and good will towards him, with the clear implication that he is bound to grant a reciprocally satisfactory conduct, to balance his verbal assurances of loyalty:

The necessity of this matter makes my skribling the more spidy e hoping that you WyL mesure my good Affection with the right balance of my actions Wiche to you shall be euer suche as I haue professed not doutinge of the reciproque of your behalfe... (Mueller and Marcus 2003, 83)

### 3. *Looking for Protection and Plenty: The Dedicatory Letters to the Queen*

The first section of the present essay has focused on how the metaphor of the scales becomes a mode of interlocation for the Queen who, as we have seen, employs its different nuances according to different situations and addressees. Elizabeth was clearly an awkward interlocutor for her correspondents, given her position and the paradox she embodied by being a female monarch of a rising power, demanding a recognition that neither her sex nor the role of her country in Europe guaranteed in full. In the exchanges with other monarchs and heads of state, as shown above, she negotiated this paradox relying on the changeable personal relationship between herself and her correspondent: adopting a flirtatious tone with Monsieur, or a motherly tone with James VI

of Scotland, meant, for each letter and for each correspondent, re-establishing the rules according to which the exchange was to be conducted. Obeying to her more powerful rhetoric, or guided by simple courtesy in addressing a lady and a Queen, her interlocutors often found themselves following the allegorical or metaphorical set-ups she proposed in her letters. As shown above, the power game is sometimes quite explicit, and the forestalling rhetoric of the Queen becomes part of her strategy of negotiation.

The second part of this paper works on the hypothesis that letters of dedication to the Queen, prefacing printed books or manuscripts, obey to the same logic of negotiation, in this case not determined by the writer but by the addressees expectations. Thus the writers taken into consideration in this section are shown to pre-empt the addressee's evaluation and intercept any possible criticism by positing her supreme understanding and intelligence as necessary requirements for a correct (for 'correct', read 'positive') assessment of the gift she is about to receive. Inevitably, the respective positions of writer and addressee in such an exchange are extremely important, and in this case scholarly work on the relationship between patrons and painters can be of help. Discussing patronage in painting, Michael Baxandall reminds us that 'painting is the deposit of a social relationship' (Baxandall 1988, 1); but, as Dennis Romano usefully observes, this form of patronage is based on a contract between the artist and an individual or institution: the contract, at least on a temporary basis, puts the two actors on an equal ground, each guaranteeing to fulfil their side of the bargain (Romano 1993, 712). Though established in eminently business terms, such a contract, given the nature of its expected outcome, is also socially and culturally binding: independently from the aesthetic results of the work which is the object of the contact, both patron and painter agree on a system of cultural significance and values, in which they engage to enter. In the case of book dedications, especially with such an illustrious dedicatee, one may presuppose a different setting, in which the writer has to *anticipate* the addressee's response, intercepting his or her approval, as it were, by encountering his/her requirements before they are explicitly stated. As Elizabeth strove to create and spread a well-defined public image, writers of dedicatory letters could (and perhaps should) model their intellectual attitude along the lines proposed by her model. It remains to be seen whether these expectations are met by the dedicatory letters to Elizabeth we possess.

In the analysis of dedicatory letters to the Queen, a fundamental tool is the index, compiled by Franklin B. Williams in 1962, of the dedications and commendatory verses appearing in English books printed up to 1641. Williams lists over a hundred books, printed between 1559 and 1603, which were either dedicated to the Queen or included verses in her praise (61-62). A recent study has added considerably to this list, counting 183 books dedicated to Queen Elizabeth (Wood 2008); it should be noted that both works

refer only to printed books and ignore the large number of manuscripts that constituted occasional or New Year's gifts (studied, for instance, in Lawson 2007). An impressive haul; but though, as has been noted, most of these dedications present florid compliments (Wood 2008, 1), they are often mechanical: the writers seem absorbed in their own composition, in its difficulties and shortcomings, and exercise little imagination in the representation of the dedicatee, or in the evocation of the encounter between the dedicatee and the book. There is sometimes the distinct feeling that the same compliments or glowing praises might be applied to any potential addressee – and perhaps they were, as shown by roughly contemporary instances.<sup>16</sup> What is probably more relevant here are the circumstances in which such dedications were penned.

Out of the vast material available, the most rewarding dedications, from our point of view, are petitionary ones: if the dedication of a book was part of a supplication for protection or financial support, the writers had to exercise all their ingenuity to guide the sovereign's gracious reception through their rhetoric. Unlike the contacts set up between painters and patrons mentioned above, the letters of dedication we are going to examine are rather to be considered petitions *for* patronage, sometimes expressed in the form of downright supplications or requests for help, protection or support, and sometimes couched in more generic terms of praise. The lack of previous intercourse between writer and addressee multiplies the risk of a *faux pas*, and transforms the dedicatory letter into the opening gambit for a more articulate game that the interlocutor is not yet prepared to play. In fact, the writer could not even be sure that the dedicatee would be the first reader of the work that was being presented: the manuscript, or first printed copy, could be received by a secretary, or another member of the household (for instance, in the case of a Latin poem by Thomas Wilson, we also have an accompanying letter to Burghley asking him to show the poem to Elizabeth; Bajetta 2001, 152-153). Indeed, while from an ordinary letter one may generally gauge the level of intimacy between the two interlocutors, a dedicatory letter may be built on no intimacy at all, and (as it accompanies a *publication*) may address the public rather than the private persona of the dedicatee. The tone of the dedications actually changes radically when Elizabeth is addressed as ruler, or as defender of the Church, or as Petrarchan mistress.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, in the case of a head of State, such a game must also obey to a strict protocol and undergo complex negotiations, as is shown by the example below.

In 1586 Georges de La Motthe, a French refugee and gentleman, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth a splendidly illuminated manuscript, now in the Bodleian Library, whose frontispiece reads: 'Hymne a tres-haute tres-puissante tres-vertueuse et tres-magnanime, Princesse, Elizabeth Roynne d'Angleterre, France, et Irelande, &c. Presentee a sa Majesté par Georges de La Motthe, gentilhomme Francoys. 1586'.<sup>18</sup> The elaborate appellation to the Queen, set in a multi-coloured page, all surrounded by symbols and showing at its centre the

image of the phoenix,<sup>19</sup> should not lead us to make unwarranted hypotheses on La Motthe's originality, or on his baroque style: it is simply the usual appellation reserved to the monarch of England, who claimed dominion (or at any rate monastic rights) also on France and Ireland. The adjectives employed are also part of a pre-existing code, and the Queen would have expected nothing less. Indeed, Elizabeth herself used almost identical words in dedicating one of the manuscripts she wrote in her youth to her father<sup>20</sup> – a chilling thought, since the appellation bespeaks the same distance between a daughter and her father as there was between La Motthe and the Queen. Appellations of public personages, in a fundamentally public context such as a frontispiece, can hardly deviate from the norm. La Motthe was engaged in a more difficult negotiation in the dedicatory letter prefacing the text, which was, as announced on the frontispiece, a hymn in praise of Elizabeth. A dedication, directly addressing the receiver in epistolary terms, sets a tone of, as it were, public intimacy: it is proposed as part of a private interaction between writer and dedicatee while aiming, in the case of a richly illuminated manuscript, at public display; in the case of a printed book, at public circulation. Evidently conscious of his precarious position as a refugee and a supplicant, La Motthe plays it rather safely, claiming that he contemplates 'selon que la capacité de mon petit Intellect se peult estendre'<sup>21</sup> the many virtues of Elizabeth, which 'vous font vray Miracle de Nature, ornement de nostre aage, honte des deuanciers, & Lumiere a la posterite, uniuersellement admirer de tout le Monde, honorer des estrangers, & adorer de voz bons et fideles subiects, Iusques a reuerer la trace bien-heureuse de voz pudiques pas' (fol. 5r).<sup>22</sup>

The rest of the long dedication is concerned partly with the contrast between such high excellence and the writer's own shortcomings, and mostly with the circumstances of the presentation of the manuscript. It is a stereotyped and highly imitative style;<sup>23</sup> its impersonality is redeemed only by the allusion to the 'pudiques pas' above, which can be read as a courteous reference to the womanly nature of the Queen. The only passages that may reveal an individual voice are those referring to the writer's own circumstances, as when he proposes a quasi-Petrarchan comparison between himself and a small, ill-equipped boat launched on the deep sea: 'Et voyant ma petite nasselle si mal equippee, calfutree, & munie, Je en eusse estré si Impudent, & temeraire d'oser luy donner voyle pour singler en si haute & profonde mer, de peur de me perdre parmy tant de perils & dangers, qui s'y peuuent trouuer' (fol. 5r).<sup>24</sup>

The metaphor continues with the mention of 'Madame la Duchesse de Lodunois' (a probable reference to Françoise de Rohan, Duchess of Lodunois) who acts as a pilot of the lost vessel, and who is probably the highly-placed intermediary that can ensure the attention of the Queen (fol. 5v). The articulate metaphor implicitly sets the Queen in the role of lodestar, distant yet benign, unconcerned with the petty details of the writer's predicament but not (one hopes) unmoved by his plight. The image, incidentally, resonates with the

many instances of Elizabeth being depicted as a sun, and the two metaphors are summed up in John Davies' dedicatory letter in verse prefacing his *Nosce te ipsum*: Elizabeth rises in the North like another Sun in glory, and is at the same time 'Loadstone to Hearts, and Loadstarre to all Eyes' (Davies 1599, A3).

La Motthe is by no means a great or original writer, as witnessed by the hymn itself, and the negotiation for patronage he undertakes here is consequently embarrassed and stereotyped; his allusion to the Petrarchan *topos* is slightly mechanical. But it could also be hypothesized that a dedication to Queen Elizabeth presented a number of problems and pitfalls with which writers had to contend. Besides, his example (exactly because he is by no means an original writer) illustrates some of the recurring characteristics of dedication letters to the Queen: the exaggerated insistence on spiritual virtues that should help the reader to forget the Queen's physical shortcomings; the recurring *topos* of the abysmal difference between the writer's desert and the dedicatee's (even potential) gifts; the use of Petrarchan motifs. In this last element we can also see another typical trait of dedication letters, when, as in the present case, the dedicatee is not only highly placed but also highly literate. As already suggested in the first part of the present article, Elizabeth, in her correspondence, would *self-fashion*, presenting an allegorical image of herself, as when, in letters to the Duke of Alençon, she describes herself as a rock 'assaulted by several storms and winds that blow from divers climes' (see letters dated 17 January 1580 and June 1581 in Marcus, Mueller and Rose 2000, 245, 249-250; see also Marcus 2002).

The quasi-Petrarchan image of the small boat lost in a deep sea resonates significantly with the allegory chosen by La Motthe; in analysing it, one is reminded of what Stephen Greenblatt and Arthur Marotti write on the aura of Petrarchism surrounding Queen Elizabeth, an aura which makes her the object of manipulation at least as much as the manipulating agent (Greenblatt 1984, 165-169). In his seminal article on Elizabethan sonnet sequences, Marotti charts the use of love imagery in an upwardly mobile context, observing how love poetry 'reflects courtly striving for the rewards available in hierarchical societies that functioned according to systems of patronage and that allowed (at least limited) forms of social mobility' (Marotti 1982, 398). The same happens in some of the imagery presented in dedicatory letters, depicting the dedicatee in such a way that it resonates with the contemporary cultural context. Such a strategy answers the writer's need to forestall any negative reaction on the part of the addressee: by aligning himself with a prevailing Petrarchan mode, La Motthe could hope to be recognised as part of a poetic coterie that has already met with the Queen's favour, and thus to be looked upon with the same benevolence.

At the same time, dedicatory letters were also informed by the text they were accompanying, and shaped their pre-emptive strategies accordingly; thus the dedication to Elizabeth prefacing the Geneva Bible kept a resolutely biblical tone, using for the Queen accents evoking the fate of martyrs:

... considering God's wonderful mercies toward you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouth of the lions, and how that from your youth you have been brought up in the Holy Scriptures, the hope of all men is so increased that they cannot but look that God should bring to pass some wonderful work by your Grace to the universal comfort of His church. (Quoted in Stump and Felch 2009, 115)

Here the Protestant polemic is evident, as is evident the equation between Elizabeth and Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6.1-28). The approval of the Queen is expected from the very role that is delineated here: the allusion to the Queen's youth is also an allusion to a difficult and dangerous time in which her fate could easily become the fate of a martyr in the hands of the 'evil' Catholic Mary, and by being reminded of her past predicament the Queen could more promptly sympathize with those who still suffered for the Protestant cause. Religious texts would often insist on this role for the Queen, using appropriate Biblical images – the blueprint here was offered by the account of Elizabeth's youth offered in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* – and comparing Elizabeth to Biblical leaders brought to face terrifying opponents, such as David or one of the prophets.<sup>25</sup>

Even in religious contexts, however, the representation of the Queen may transcend simple comparisons with Biblical or religious characters and be connoted with images of protection and fruitfulness; it is the case, for instance, of the long and rich dedicatory letter written by Andrew Willet for his *Synopsis papismi*, published in London in 1592:

The Lord hath made you a wall and a hedge to his vineyard to keepe out the wilde-boare: a goodly tree to giue shade to the beasts of the field, & succour to the foules of the aire, a nurse to the people of God, to carry them in your bosome, as the nurse beareth the sucking child. (Willet 1592, A2r-v)

It is an extraordinarily articulate image, carrying the same implications of all-embracing protectiveness that we find in some of the maritime images quoted elsewhere in this article. Beyond the religious tones, Elizabeth is a guarantee of peace, protection and prosperity: a note struck also by John Jones in his dedication to *The Arte and Science of Preseruing Bodie and Soule in Healtie, Wisedome, and Catholike Religion*, printed in London in 1579, in which Elizabeth is compared to 'a grain yarde' (Jones 1579, Avv). If in the dedication of the Geneva Bible Elizabeth is the young, fearless warrior, here she is transformed into a motherly image of plenty: for the Geneva writers, she was expected to provide support to the English Protestants that were suffering persecution abroad (as she herself had been persecuted); the English controversialist, on the other hand, addressed her as the mother and protector of the nation. The role prepared for her in these dedications corresponds to the expectations she is supposed to answer.

Lay dedications, on the other hand, could risk no Biblical echo, and would have to fall back on less charged images, such as those offered by the developing Petrarchist tradition, authoritatively linked to the image of Elizabeth by Sir Walter

Raleigh's sonnet commending Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, celebrating a Queen 'at whose approach the soule of Petrarke wept'.<sup>26</sup> It may be added that, in the decades following Elizabeth's death, nostalgia prompted the construction of a myth that was suffused with Petrarchan attributes: thus we have doubtful and posthumous attributions of Petrarchist literary works to Elizabeth (such as the one concerning the poem 'On Monsieur's Departure'), which may be the result of the construction of cultural authority around the figure of the dead Queen (Marcus 2002, 146-148). The ability of the dedication writer was then to understand the importance of this construction as it was still in its developing stages: as in the case of La Motthe, many writers participate in the building of an idealized image of Elizabeth as a benign Petrarchan mistress. It is impossible to know what Elizabeth herself thought of this construction, though her jocular poem dedicated to Walter Raleigh, part of a poetic exchange undertaken *circa* 1587 (Marcus, Mueller and Rose 2000, 307-309), seems to show that she was consciously participating in the Petrarchan game; what is clear is that this construction allowed writers of dedicatory letters to fashion the image of the benefactress according to her own expectations.

Other writers would play a comparatively simpler game, insisting, in their dedication, on traits they knew not simply to belong to the Queen, but to be qualities she would prize in herself; thus Petruccio Ubaldini, publishing his *Rime* in 1596, would insist on the Queen's love of the Italian language: 'Hò alcuna volta cercato d'alleggerir le mietediose vigilie con qualch [*sic*] numero di versi nella mia maternal lingua, alla Maestà vostra tanto cara, & familiar' (Ubaldini 1596, A2v).<sup>27</sup>

It is well known that the Queen often and publicly expressed a fondness for the Italian language;<sup>28</sup> it might be supposed that Italian writers had thus a natural advantage in addressing their works to the Queen. This, at least, certainly seems Ubaldini's supposition, as the very use of Italian is mentioned here as a sure way of meeting Her Majesty's favour. Immediately after this letter, besides, Ubaldini inserts a series of sonnets, once again addressing the Queen, but this time in recognizably Petrarchan terms, attributing to Elizabeth the supernatural power of the courtly lady: 'Voi sola in me seren potete, e chiaro, / render l'aer gravato hoggi da nebbia' (Sonnet 1, lines 9-10).<sup>29</sup> Once, however, the poet abandons generic praise and turns to a more specific celebration of the monarch, the nautical metaphors reappear, as they do in the central stanzas of the second sonnet:

Mentre piu d'hor in hor la mente interno,  
 Nel mar de i vostri merti, e la profonda,  
 Acqua voglio solcar, non veggio sponda,  
 Ch'ei fin non ha: nè d'io falso discerno.

Perch'io mia debil barca à vela, e à remi  
 Guido per l'onde, spinta da quel vento,  
 Ch'al porto di salute altrui conduce.<sup>30</sup>

The tone and imagery might strike a casual reader as, again, Petrarchan; but, as in the case of the nautical imagery employed by La Motthe, here the Queen is not sailing in the frail boat, but is one of the superhuman forces in this scene, a guidance and goal for the weary mariner.

The weighing of scales, ships and rocks in the stormy sea, a wall surrounding a vineyard, granaries and goodly trees: the imaginary world suggested by these letters is not only revealing of a cultural climate, or of Petrarchan fashion, but also of the social climate, and of the main worries and interests of a nation then expanding its commercial (and thus political) power on land and sea. Elizabeth herself would make use of maritime imagery in her poems, as in the case of the Song composed upon the occasion of the Armada victory, in which she celebrated the Lord who ‘made the winds and waters rise’ (Marcus, Mueller and Rose 2000, 411), and would insist, up to her last recorded speech, on ‘peace and prosperity’ for her loving people, goals that ‘we evermore prefer before all temporal blessings’ (Marcus, Mueller and Rose 2000, 353). This repertory of images creates a common language, shared by the Queen and many of the writers who dedicated their works to her, and authorizes the strategy of pre-emptive evaluation hypothesized at the beginning of this section. One of the less subtle instances of such a strategy is offered by the already mentioned Ubaldini, in the dedication of his *Vite delle donne illustri*:

Onde ella giustamente degnarsi possa di muouer se stessa à corrisponder alla mia giusta speranza con proportionata clemenza, accettando gratamente il picciol dono, ch’io diuotamente le porgo, stimandolo verace memoria (se gli historici pur il vero ne dicono essi) di quelle Donne tutte in essa opera raccolte, et descritte...<sup>31</sup> (Ubaldini 1591, 4r)

What is revealing here is Ubaldini’s use of *giustamente* and *giusta*: it is as if the writer’s hope of a benefit was turning into a rightful expectation. The same justice that is such a natural attribute of the Queen should ‘justly’ move her to favour the dedicator: the epistolary rhetoric here, clumsily manipulated by Ubaldini, shows the intended strategy beneath. If, as noted above, Elizabeth always strived to be in control, even of her interlocutors, other writers could be less adept at this game; but what is important here is the participation of all players to a shared language, a common code of patronage and protection.

<sup>1</sup> Giuliana Iannaccaro is responsible for sections 1 and 2 of the present article; Alessandra Petrina for section 3.

<sup>2</sup> Among the various, recent publications dealing with Queen Elizabeth’s epistles from a literary perspective, see the collections which appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century: Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, eds 2000; Mueller and Marcus 2003; Pryor 2003; May 2004. On the Queen’s mode(s) of letter writing, see Kouri 1982; Bassnett 1988; Crane 1988; Mueller 1994; Mueller 2000; Schneider 2005; Beal and Ioppolo 2007; Duncan-Jones 2007;

Iamartino and Andreani 2010; Baseotto 2011; Coatalen 2011; Gibson 2011; Allinson 2007 and 2012. On early modern letter writing by women, see Warnicke 1983, and Daybell 1999, 2001 and 2006.

<sup>3</sup> On Elizabeth's handwriting see Woudhuysen 2007 and Gibson 2011.

<sup>4</sup> See Mueller and Marcus 2003, Letters 13, 14, 15, and 16 (19-24). All quotations are taken from this edition.

<sup>5</sup> February 21, 1549. It is Letter 15 in Mueller and Marcus (2003, 21-22).

<sup>6</sup> For instances of the Queen's role as political advisor to be found also in her correspondence with foreign ruling powers, see Iannaccaro, forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> See Doran 1989 and 1996; see also MacCaffrey 2004, 91-100.

<sup>8</sup> The 1566 and 1567 holograph letters, in Italian, that Elizabeth I sent to Maximilian, have been transcribed, edited and translated by Carlo Bajetta, and are to be published in C.M. Bajetta, G. Coatalen and J. Gibson, forthcoming. I am thankful to Carlo Bajetta for permission to quote from these letters before publication. For a rhetorical analysis of the same epistles, see Iannaccaro, forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> This is the complete sentence: 'se vi piacerà bilanciar con mano dretta questa causa mi pare che tal obiectione di già ha la sua risposta' ('If... you will weigh this matter with an even hand, it appears to me that such an objection is already answered'). All translations from the original Italian are by C.M. Bajetta.

<sup>10</sup> 'It seems to me that it would be better for both to see each other. Who knows whether he would like the choice made by the eyes of another? *Tot capita tot sensus*. What pleases one is not acceptable to another. If his coming should be without result, the shame would be no less mine than his... If, therefore, you will weigh this matter with an even hand, it appears to me that such an objection is already answered.'

<sup>11</sup> The English version of the French original is to be found in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 2000, 243: '[The] public exercise of the Roman religion sticks so much in their [the English people's] hearts that I will never consent to your coming among such a company of malcontents'.

<sup>12</sup> '... rash judgments at the first stroke, without having weighed in a better balance the depth of their opinions', in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 2000, 243.

<sup>13</sup> The sonnet 'On Monsieur's Departure', attributed to the Queen, displays the same dichotomy between heart and duty in a much more dramatic way. The identification of 'Monsieur' with Francis, by then Duke of Anjou, and the sonnet's dating (ca. 1582) are only conjectural. See Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 2000, 302-303.

<sup>14</sup> 'I do not fear to present myself before the seat of your just judgment and acquit myself of every wile and dissimulation', in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 2000, 243.

<sup>15</sup> This letter is as yet unpublished. It was transcribed, edited and translated by Guillaume Coatalen, and is to be published in Bajetta, Coatalen and Gibson, forthcoming. I am thankful to Guillaume Coatalen for permission to quote from this letter before publication: '... notwithstanding, I cannot fail to take care of your grandeur further, and I beg you very humbly first to weigh in scales which accidents may occur to you, like, in the first instance, if a marriage followed'.

<sup>16</sup> One of the most notable cases of multiple dedication concerns Reginald Pole's *De Unitate* (1537), extant in three versions with three prefaces, one addressed to Charles V, King of Spain, one to the King of Scotland, and one to Edward VI of England (van Dyke 1904, 700).

<sup>17</sup> It might also be noted that, in some of the instances in which the author of the dedication is a person well-known to the Queen (as in the case of Francis Bacon's letters accompanying his New Year's gifts to the Queen between 1594 and 1602, transcribed in Stump and Felch 2009, 513-514), the tone is much more business-like, and there is very little room for metaphors or allegorical imagery.

<sup>18</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fr.e.1 (*olim* Miscellaneous 3062), frontispiece. The manuscript is briefly described in Craster and Madan 1922, 581.

<sup>19</sup>The manuscript is indeed striking for the beauty of its layout and the sumptuousness of the illumination, as well as for the elegant hand employed. These characteristics in fact should not be automatically connected with the purpose of the manuscript, since, as observed by Carlo Bajetta, gift books to the Queen might show a poor handwriting (Bajetta 2001, 149).

<sup>20</sup>'A treshault et trespuissant et redouble Prince Henry 8 de ce nom Roy d'Angleterre, de France, et d'Irlande, defenseur de la foy, Elisabeth sa tres humble fille, rend salut et devot obedience'. The dedication is transcribed in Marcus 2002, 137.

<sup>21</sup>'As far as my poor intellect can encompass'. All translations from La Motthe are mine.

<sup>22</sup>'Make of you a true miracle of nature, an ornament of our age, the shame of her predecessor, and the light of posterity, universally admired by the whole world, honoured by foreigners, and adored by your good and faithful subjects, to the point of revering the happy trace of your modest steps'.

<sup>23</sup>It has, in fact, been imitated on many occasions. Among the best parodies is one by the early twentieth-century writer P.G. Wodehouse: in his dedication prefacing *Bertie Wooster Sees it Through* he imitates the tone of literary flattery thus: 'It is with inexpressible admiration for your lordship's transcendent gifts that the poor slob who now addresses your lordship presents to your lordship this trifling work, so unworthy of your lordship's distinguished consideration'.

<sup>24</sup>'And seeing my little boat, so ill-equipped, prepared and armed, I would be so Impudent and foolhardy as to set sail and venture onto such a deep sea, that I am afraid I might lose myself amidst so many dangers, that I may find there'.

<sup>25</sup>The comparison between Elizabeth and David is to be found, for instance, in the anonymous dedication of a book of psalms published in Geneva in 1559 and in Thomas Stapleton's Catholic pamphlet, published in Antwerp in 1566 (Wood 2008, 126-127).

<sup>26</sup>Line 7. See Spenser 1590, Pp3v.

<sup>27</sup>'I have sometimes tried to lighten my tedious vigils with a few verses in my mother tongue, so dear and familiar to Your Majesty'.

<sup>28</sup>I have analysed Elizabeth's attitude towards the Italian language in Petrina, forthcoming.

<sup>29</sup>'You alone can bring sunshine in me, and clear the air now made heavy by fog'.

<sup>30</sup>'As I immerse myself more and more in the sea of your many merits, as I try to wade through that deep water, I see to shore, no end: nor do I see falsely. Because my frail boat I steer, with sail and oars, across the waves, driven by that wind that leads others to a safe harbour'.

<sup>31</sup>'So that she may justly deign to correspond to my just hope with adequate benevolence, gratefully accepting the small gift I make to her in all devotion, evoking the memory (if historians tell the truth) of all those women here gathered and described...'

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# The Prefatory/Postscript Letters to St. Thomas More's *Utopia*: The Culture of 'Seeing' as a Reality-Conferring Strategy

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## *Abstract*

The article discusses the significance of on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing as powerful scientific tools for establishing the real in the early sixteenth century. In particular, I argue that the simulation of such tools in the paratextual material to *Utopia*, especially the prefatory/postscript letters, enhance, preemptively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society as well as the materiality of the island at hand. If eye witnessing is reality-conferring, then, the powerful Renaissance act of reading a text as a simulation of eye witnessing is reality-conferring too. In this light, to read *Utopia* through the paratextual letters is to place one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as *reading* simulates the act of *seeing* with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

*Keywords:* Eye Witnessing, Humanism, Paratext, *Utopia*, Verisimilitude

## 1. *Paratext, Utopia and Liminality*

Nearly five hundred years after its first publication in 1516, Thomas More's *Utopia* continues to spark endless discussions in relation to its potential meanings or its exact nature.<sup>1</sup> More could not have written *Utopia* at a better time. As Alistair Fox maintains, when he sat down to write it in 1515, 'His imagination had been excited by the discoveries of Cabot and Vespucci in the New World... the momentum of Erasmian reform was approaching its height; and he had the stimulating company... of Cuthbert Tunstal, Busleyden and Peter Giles, humanists with interests and ambitions similar to his own' (1984, 53). The publication of *Utopia* was accompanied by paratextual material (at times called *parerga*) – maps, illustrations, verses as well as a number of letters written by friends or acquaintances from the wider humanist continental circles. By fervently supporting the project, this paratextual material – which was altered to a great degree from edition to edition, thus also constantly reshaping readers' reception of *Utopia* – worked towards legitimising More's endeavour, establishing its truthfulness, and announcing beforehand its acceptance by early sixteenth-century readership.<sup>2</sup>

'Paratext' in literature covers everything that lies *around* a text. Gérard Genette has famously called paratext 'a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*' between the author(s) and the public, or 'the most socialized side of the practice of literature' (1997, 1, 14).

This 'transaction' is even more conspicuous in early modern texts where, for instance, prefatory material frequently proves to be not just a typical introduction but, rather, an integral part to the main text, a point of liminality at which fictional text and nonfictional reality intersect.<sup>3</sup> In the case of *Utopia*, the paratextual material of the five main Latin editions published in More's lifetime (along with the translation of that material into vernacular languages after his death in 1535) performed an even more decisive role as it enhanced the mobility of the text across different cultures, thereby effecting diverse modes of knowledge transfer and cultural exchange.<sup>4</sup> I will limit the scope of the essay to the analysis of the prefatory/postscript letters appended to the early Latin editions of *Utopia* rather than expand on the entire paratext of the project.<sup>5</sup> This, of course, does not mean that the paratextual value of, say, the Utopian map will not come up in the development of the case I am making.

In this essay, I embark upon the significance of on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing as powerful scientific tools for establishing the real in the early sixteenth century. In particular, I argue that the simulation of such tools in the paratextual material to *Utopia*, especially the prefatory/postscript letters, enhance, pre-emptively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society as well as the materiality of the island at hand. If eye witnessing is reality-conferring, then, the powerful Renaissance act of reading a text, as a simulation of *eye* witnessing, is reality-conferring too. In this light, to read (or 'witness') the paratextual material of *Utopia* is to place one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as *reading* simulates the act of *seeing* with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

*Visibility* performs a crucial role in authenticating Utopia, and more generally in Renaissance epistemology, in the sense that sight is gradually replacing the medieval practice of hearsay – rumour, conjecture, small talk. In 'The Medieval Travel Narrative', Paul Zumthor and Catherine Peebles assert that 'from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, sight replaces hearing' in the sense that the invention of such 'technological' artefacts as the book and the map (or even the telescope later in the seventeenth century) enabled human beings to see for themselves and realize the existence of things they had only heard of before, or things only rumoured to exist (1994, 817). 'Seeing' in the Renaissance constitutes a method of mapping out a reality as well as *constructing* one.<sup>6</sup> Denise Albanese affirms that in the early Renaissance 'the epistemology of sight... serve[s] the emergent ideology of science: what is known through seeing is reconfigured as more real, and... tale-telling is replaced by an optical warrant whose signs are themselves available to be seen, read, and hence believed' (1990, 521).

In such a climate, on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing are beginning to be considered reliable scientific methods, therefore, because of people's increasing confidence in the new technological era, as representing reality accurately. Therefore, 'I believe because I have seen' becomes the

prevalent motto frequently repressing its religious other – 'I see because I believe'. What is of importance, though, is that the objectivity attributed to the 'scientificity' of sight/witnessing spread also to the terrain of the written word. The advent of the book culture and the technological dissemination of knowledge via typography led to a reification of reading and the building of trust in the knowledge conveyed by the text.<sup>7</sup> We now consider something real and true not only because we have heard it or seen it with our own eyes but also because we have read it or, rather, seen it written down on paper (or even read that someone *else*, a humanist friend perhaps, has seen it).<sup>8</sup> In such a case, writing constructs rather than merely reflects reality, while reading, as an artificial mode of eye witnessing, simulates on-the-spot observation.

## 2. *Humanism and Friendliness in the Utopian Letters*

The prelude and postlude letters contribute immensely to situating *Utopia* culturally and intellectually, but they also produce additional authorial voices collaborating in the work and interfering with the very nature of the island of Utopia, namely its supposed 'verisimilitude'.<sup>9</sup> George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller argue that More may have written *Utopia* but the publication itself must have been 'heavily dependent on Giles and Erasmus' work as editors, agents, publicists and commentators, and buttressed by the... interpretative letters and poems of a number of other humanists' (1994, 276). The humanists' interpretative letters serve not only to interpret (or *misinterpret*) the meanings of *Utopia* but also to bear witness to the materiality of the island, thus authenticating, somehow, its *real* dimension.<sup>10</sup>

Humanism, and more particularly Erasmian humanism, moulded the character of what would become the independent intellectual.<sup>11</sup> Still, no matter how 'independent' they might be, the humanist scholars involved in advertising *Utopia* were implicated in the process of disseminating knowledge about the work (or information about the island) through their culture and practice of *friendship*, which created mutual trust as well as confidence in the plausibility of each other's arguments about *Utopia*.<sup>12</sup> The verisimilitude of the work depends largely upon the credibility of the humanists who endorse it and who ask their own (humanist) friends to act likewise.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the credibility of the reports on *Utopia* was largely connected with the social stature of humanist 'friends' which created trust in their sayings.

In his prefatory letter to Thomas Lupset, exclusive to the 1517 and 1518 editions of *Utopia*, Budé attests to the crucial role of humanist friendship, formed within the so-called 'Republic of Letters', in taking More seriously and *Utopia* literally.<sup>14</sup> As he affirms:

It was the testimony of Peter Giles of Antwerp which caused me to have full faith in More, who of himself carries weight and relies on great authority. I have never known

Giles in person – I am now passing over the recommendation given his learning and character – but I love him on account of his sworn friendship with the illustrious Erasmus, who has deserved exceedingly well of sacred and profane letters of all kinds. With Erasmus himself, I have long ago formed an association of friendship sealed by an exchange of letters.<sup>15</sup>

Hythlodæus, who was an eyewitness to the Utopian society, supposedly gave Thomas More, in the presence of Peter Giles, a full account of his experiences on the island. We can gather from the excerpt above that Budé is reluctant to take More at his word but he finally accepts the truthfulness of his narrative for the sake of Giles who, too, has heard Hythlodæus' oral account and who is considered a reliable witness 'given his learning and character'. Budé, however, is also quick to add that he has never met Giles in person, yet he trusts him fully on account of the latter's close friendship with Erasmus with whom Budé seems to have actually 'formed an association of friendship' via their common humanist background. Budé, therefore, claims to have been able to bear witness to the materiality of Utopia not because he is an eyewitness himself but, rather astonishingly, because he can testify to the credibility of Erasmus' friend (Giles) as well as to the authenticity of *Utopia* as text *and* country. In a sense, he has borne witness to the veracity of the words that he, or someone else, has read with regard to the Utopian society rather than actually seen for himself the physical reality of Utopia. At stake is a fictional re-enactment, on the part of friends, of the (pseudo)scientific method of on-the-spot observation, whereby reading simulates seeing or witnessing. Given that visibility, in a way, authenticates the real, then, by association, a visible (that is, legible) text, whether it be literary or historical, does establish the real too, on account of its being read, witnessed, thereby taken at face value. The text of *Utopia* as artifice and material entity seems strangely entangled in the articulation of the allegedly 'natural' reality outside it.

The notion of friendship is a recurrent motif in Budé's letter and comes up a lot in other *Utopia*-related letters too. Erasmus always believed that knowledge can only be secured, played with, or negotiated within an ambience of friendly reciprocity:

His greatest pleasure is to praise absent friends to friends present. Since he is greatly loved by so many men, and that too in different parts of the world, because of his learning and most charming character, he tries earnestly to bind all men together with that same affection which all have for him alone. And so he constantly mentions each one of his friends individually to them all; and to insinuate them into the friendship of all the others, he constantly talks about those qualities each one has that deserve affection. (Surtz 1965, lxiii)<sup>16</sup>

In his letter to John Froben, added to the 1518 editions of *Utopia* (but not to the first two editions), Erasmus invokes his quasi-brotherly affinity with

More and close friendship with other humanists to convince him (Froben) of the high quality of *Utopia*: 'Now, however, I see that all learned men unanimously subscribe to my opinion and admire the man's superhuman genius...' (Surtz 1965, 3/5-7). In case his invocation of the respected authority of More fails, and as a fallback option, Erasmus resorts to commendations of Froben's publication house as well as refers to his own kinship with Froben himself – Erasmus is the godfather of Froben's child – in order to ensure, through flattery, the publication of *Utopia*. His final exhortation regarding his godson's learning is the icing on the cake: 'so mind that he is trained in all good learning' (Surtz 1965, 3/30-1). It appears almost as if Erasmus were bullying Froben into publishing More's text, as if anything else except publication would be unacceptable.<sup>17</sup>

The reality or fictitiousness of the Utopian land is endlessly negotiated by the humanists in the introductory and postscript letters to the project, not only as a way of working out the nature of what we call reality but, perhaps just as importantly, as a way of maintaining an inside joke in the 'ongoing spirit of gamesmanship on the part of its [humanist] formulators regarding not only their sixteenth-century readers but also readers in the distant future' (Freeman 2007, 14). In his letter to Lupset, Budé, jokingly or not, has indubitably taken *Utopia* at face value:

I personally, however, have made investigation and discerned for certain that Utopia lies outside the limits of the known world. Undoubtedly it is one of the Fortunate Isles, perhaps close to the Elysian Fields, for More himself testifies that Hythlodæus has not yet stated its position by giving its definite bearings... We owe the knowledge of this island to Thomas More, who has made public for our age this model of the happy life and this rule of living. The discoverer, as More himself reveals, is Hythlodæus, to whom he ascribes the whole account. On the one hand, Hythlodæus is the one who has built their city for the Utopians... [o]n the other hand, beyond question it is More who has adorned the island and its holy institutions by his style and eloquence... [even though] he has claimed for himself only the role of an arranger of materials.<sup>18</sup>

Budé employs the discourse of scientific investigation ('I have made investigation') to express his certainty of the real existence of *Utopia* and his astonishment at the moral integrity and incredibly virtuous conduct of its citizens. Nonetheless, as soon as the reader is convinced that Budé's enthusiasm about *Utopia* is based on real facts and tangible evidence, Budé suddenly shifts towards giving More all the credit, not only for the actual knowledge of the island but also for the literary configuration of the Utopian society. What he does is fuse the literal element – *Utopia* is for real – with the literary: it is More who has created *the island* itself, not just the book about it. By the end of the letter we are at a loss trying to figure out whether the book is literal or just 'literary'. The answer arises out of leaving the problem unresolved, thereby giving birth to the island as simulation, which evades the reality/non-reality

dichotomy altogether to such an extent that the exact meaning of Budé's letter utterly eludes the reader. The entire Utopian project broaches the question of the truthfulness of simulation by playing the real and the fictional against each other without meaning to resolve the issue by harmonizing the two. Does Utopia exist, or is it a figment of imagination? Regardless of whether it exists or not, is it the blueprint of an ideal (or dystopian) society that can or cannot be realized in the future?

### 3. *Simulation as Reality in Utopian Correspondence*

Contemporary criticism has commented on the simulating nature of the work: 'More manages to evade one of the most thorny questions of Renaissance imitation – that is, whether art or nature was the principal object of mimetic practice – by hopelessly confusing the status of the "original"', argues Marina Leslie (1999, 77). To 'confuse the status of the original' is to have recourse to simulation. One of the workings of simulation is the overproduction of artificial signs that eventually point to the lack of any real referent.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, one could claim that the overabundance of details and the plethora of information (or the lack of it) about Utopia within the prefatory letters allude to the possibility that a game concerning the nature of the real is on. More particularly, there seems to be an overlap between the fake and the real, given that Utopia, 'after all, is a fantasy; and – many of the difficulties in interpreting the book result from this – fantasy itself dwells where the boundary between dreaming and waking, imagery and actuality, is not a sharp line but a broad, indistinct twilight region' (Surtz 1965, Ixxviii).

The mentality of the letters on Utopia apparently springs from such a twilight region where actual fact and illusion become one. Budé's letter to Lupset privileges the written account of the island over Hythlodæus' own oral description. In this case, the latter's account is already a copy of a distant reality, while More's text is *literally* a copy that is more 'counterfeit' than Hythlodæus' own copy/representation. The question of which of the two – More or Hythlodæus – is the author, the artificer of the island of Utopia, is disregarded in favour of a resistance to imitation. Each takes turns authoring *Utopia*, this resulting in an ambiguity at the level of distinguishing the original from the copy, the model from the reproduction.

Peter Giles' letter to Jerome Busleyden, printed with all five early editions of *Utopia*, demonstrates the power of the written word as a materiality and its influence on the reader's mind as an accurate representation of reality. It is through Raphael Hythlodæus that we have access to the Utopian society. Hythlodæus is the only one who has allegedly been to the island of Utopia, therefore his narrative (his speech) ostensibly exhausts all the possibilities of representing the island accurately. However, although truth and reality should normally be conveyed by Hythlodæus' mouth, Giles does not seem to think so:

Most excellent Busleyden, the other day, Thomas More, the greatest ornament of this age of ours, as you too can testify because of your intimate acquaintance with him, sent me his *Island of Utopia*. It is known as yet to few mortals, but it is eminently worthy of everyone's knowledge as being superior to Plato's republic... [A] man of great eloquence has represented, painted, and set it before our eyes in such a way that, as often as I read it, I think I see far more than when, being as much a part of the conversation as More himself, I heard Raphael Hythlodæus' own words sounding in my ears. And yet this Hythlodæus... so described his subject as to make it readily apparent that he was not repeating what he had learned from the accounts of others but telling what he had taken in directly with his own eyes and what he had long experienced personally.<sup>20</sup>

Albeit present throughout the conversation between More and Hythlodæus, Giles thinks of the latter's sayings as less vivid than More's writings. Vividness, at this point, is associated with accuracy, transparency and representability – 'I see far more than... I heard Hythlodæus' own words.' In simpler terms, More's words are 'truer' than Hythlodæus' sounds, regardless of Raphael's indubitable rhetorical ability in putting his point across and depicting Utopia. However, truthfulness, according to Giles, is not an issue of the dichotomy 'writing-speaking' or 'words-sounds'; far from positing simplistic dualities, it is witnessing/gazing at the material space of the text itself that retains the privilege to formulate reality; an act of *seeing* as mapping out, as contrasted to merely *hearing* stories. On the other hand, Giles does not wish to dissipate the reliability of Hythlodæus' oral account. Hythlodæus is not repeating the accounts of others but, rather, describing what he actually saw and experienced while in Utopia, which entails that the island does exist insofar as he was an eyewitness himself! More's written reproduction of the account may be more vivid and accurate, yet it is based upon presumably authentic, palpable, personal experience which ratifies the actuality of Utopia.

As we have already mentioned, in the sixteenth century we move from a culture and ethics of hearsay to a culture of sight that gives off an air of objectivity: seeing for oneself or on-the-spot observation translates into illustrating realistically, or better, simulating realism, insofar as the method employed – close inspection – appears to be leading to 'scientific' truthfulness (it has the appearance of verisimilitude) therefore imparts knowledge and information which is, at least ostensibly, objective and realistic.<sup>21</sup> In his letter, Giles employs the same method of witnessing (rather than hearing), only this time it is artificially presented as it constitutes a simulation of the 'scientific' method of seeing. He supposes that 'we tell more effectively what we have seen than what we have heard' (Surtz 1965, 23/1-2) but, at the same time, twists the argument in such a way as to include himself as someone who witnesses the text about Utopia rather than hears the story. Therefore, he is assuming the role of a reliable witness to the Utopian way of life despite the fact that he, like More, has never been anywhere near the island. He can testify to the

unquestionable ontology of... the Utopian text, that is, the simulacrum of the society at issue. What is more, he seems to believe that the royal way to the exposure of reality is More's book which, at best, represents Utopia at second or even third remove from the 'real thing' – More re-enacts Hythlodæus' own representation of the real Utopia. One can infer that the representation is given priority over the authentic (?) description by Hythlodæus (which is a representation too), or that the simulacrum, however artificial, precedes reality and establishes its own truth.

The priority of the book as a truthful simulacrum that *constitutes* Utopia is potentially reinforced by an interesting detail from More's family circle. Allegedly, six months after the publication of *Utopia*, More's brother-in-law John Rastell attempted an expedition not to Utopia but to the New World. This project, which was a failure, had probably resulted from 'his proximity to the More household'; but it might just as well have been his own idea all along the line (Geritz 1999, 40). Yet, it is likely that Rastell's desire to literally seek out new tangible worlds was intensified by the possibility of discovering exotic, Utopian, lands just like the one More was talking about. In a way, the fictional world of literature and the real world of sixteenth-century colonialist politics had merged into each other via the figure of the simulacrum. Indeed, Rastell might have testified to the possibility of the existence of the Utopian island (and, by extension, of other real worlds) insofar as he *read* (or *saw*) More's text 'with his own eyes' and placed his trust in More's sayings about Utopia.<sup>22</sup>

One should not overlook Giles' insight that 'in all the five years which Raphael spent on the island, he did not see as much as one may perceive in More's description'.<sup>23</sup> This is an extraordinary statement. To claim that More is much more of an expert of description and rhetorical argumentation than Hythlodæus would be quite an understandable statement. More might have been better at writing than Hythlodæus at narrating and there is nothing strange about this possibility. However, it is one thing to say that there is more to be seen in Thomas More's written account than in Raphael's oral depiction of Utopia, and quite another to say that there is more in More's account than Raphael himself can have seen. The former case implies an improvement upon Hythlodæus' narrative imperfections – More is more meticulous in representing – whereas the latter confuses the written word with objective truth – Hythlodæus' 'real' experience and testimony. Leslie notes how 'strikingly, Gilles [sic] associates sight... not with Hythlodæus' first-person experience or reportage but with the experience of reading More's representation of that account' (1999, 75).

It follows from Giles' claim that the written word, namely the book called *Utopia*, aspires not only to reconstruct real experiences but also to construct brand new, 'tangible' ones. Raphael Hythlodæus' eyes have seen many things in the real world of Utopia, Thomas More's pen has written even more, while the reader, in turn, simulates the (pseudo)scientific method of literally bearing

witness to the Utopian ways through More's own textual universe but also through Erasmus' and Giles' own critical additions to his text; because it is already known that Giles admits to having, himself, appended a poem of four lines in the Utopian vernacular, which Hythlodæus produced strangely only *after* More had left: 'There was only a poem of four lines... which... Hythlodæus happened to show me. This verse, preceded by the Utopian alphabet, I have caused to be added to the book' (Surtz 1965, 23/22-25). Giles also confesses to having appended his own commentary on the margins of More's text. As has been suggested by critics, 'a text we now associate immediately with Thomas More associated itself, in the initial period of its formation, with a range of humanists whose letters introduce the dialogue, many of whom were directly tied to Continental printing houses' (Trevor 2001, 748).

#### 4. *Overhearing and Memory Lapse as Legitimizing Tactics*

The prefatory material of *Utopia* provides significant examples of the fragile analogy 'seeing/hearing'-'writing/speaking'. In fact, Giles' letter contains one of the funniest, yet cogent, arguments against the representational potential of the act of hearing somebody speak; an argument hinted at by More himself in his first prefatory letter to Peter Giles – printed with the original edition (Luvain 1516) of *Utopia* (as well as with the rest of the early Latin editions) – wherein he expresses his uncertainty as to how the location of Utopia escaped his attention or his memory despite the fact that many other less important details did find their way into the text: More says: 'We forgot to ask, and he forgot to say, in what part of the new world Utopia lies. I am sorry that point was omitted, and I would be willing to pay a considerable sum to purchase that information, partly because I am rather ashamed to be ignorant in what sea lies the island of which I am saying so much...'.<sup>24</sup> Paradoxically, More's (feigned) inability to locate the island authenticates his story and renders him a sincere and reliable witness. By contrast, pretending to know *where exactly* Utopia lies would probably sound too good to be true, thereby compromising the society's non-real identity. At any rate, Peter Giles, in his letter to Jerome Busleyden, provides us with the cause of More's distraction or memory gap:

While Raphael was speaking on the topic, one of More's servants had come up to him to whisper something or other in his ear. I was therefore listening all the more intently when one of our company who had, I suppose, caught cold on shipboard, coughed so loudly that I lost some phrases of what Raphael said. I shall not rest, however, till I have full information on this point so that I shall be able to tell you exactly not only the location of the island but even the longitude and latitude – provided that our friend Hythlodæus be alive and safe.<sup>25</sup>

The geographical spot of the country is probably one of the most significant pieces of information one can disclose with regard to Utopia; only, it is the

one that fails to be disclosed due to a... whisper in More's ear and also to some colleague's flu.<sup>26</sup> Such an absolutely functional detail as its exact location – 'where in the world is Utopia' – falls prey to the whimsical nature of oral narration. It takes a whisper to 'silence' an entire country, while it takes a cough to erase the name it goes by. Furthermore, should there be a need to consult Hythlodæus regarding the island's position one would find oneself in a deadlock since there have been various rumours about him either being dead or back to Utopia.

It is difficult to believe either Thomas More or Peter Giles when they resort, though humorously, to such extravagant excuses in order to keep the island untraceable, undiscoverable. Of course, it would seem unnatural if the entire conversation with Hythlodæus were written down exactly as it was carried out, despite More's contention, in his first letter to Giles, that it was really perfectly easy to write down what he had heard, because

I had only to repeat what in your company I heard Raphael relate. Hence there was no reason for me to take trouble about the style of the narrative, seeing that his language could not be polished... Therefore the nearer my style came to his careless simplicity the closer it would be to the truth... Since, it remained for me only to write out simply what I had heard, there was no difficulty about it.<sup>27</sup>

More's allegation that he did not refine or elaborate Hythlodæus' oral account – an allegation made also, except in an ironic way, by Beatus Rhenanus in his postscript letter to Willibald Pirckheimer from the 1518 edition – is obviously a way to insulate his written narrative from the charge of partiality and personal intervention in the telling of the story.<sup>28</sup> In short, he pretends to objectivity as to how he represents Hythlodæus' own oral narrative. Insofar as More's 'objective' and presumably accurate narrative is based upon the oral account of a man who is not imaginary but absolutely real as well as 'superior even to Ulysses himself in his knowledge of countries, men and affairs' (Giles to Busleyden, Surtz 1965, 21/30-31), it follows that *Utopia* and its accompanying letters simulate, indeed constitute, on-the-spot-observation, the act of seeing as literally testifying to the actual existence of the Utopian society. In an oblique way, the reader is asked to believe that the textual material is authentic and turn a blind eye to the fact that its 'authenticity' is established only retrospectively, through the loss or lack of a crucial detail: the exact location of the island.

Paradoxically, it is the lack of this detail that, in essence, preserves (or rather constructs) the memory of a real Utopia. Albeit already suspicious of Utopian reality, the reader is coerced into believing that the island exists even though it is hard to say where. Supposing that More and Giles do have the right answer but for some reason hide it from us, it is probably an effective way of retaining Utopia in its Utopian, placeless location, its non-topos. Forgetting

where it lies is a sufficient pretext for not bringing its people and the Europeans together, which would result in the colonisation of the former by the latter. In his first letter to Giles, More addresses, perhaps mockingly, the possibility of visiting Utopia 'for the purpose of fostering and promoting our religion' (Surtz 1965, 43/9). To bypass the question 'where is Utopia?' is to respect the island by preserving its unrepresentability. Forgetting its exact location allows it to exist, somehow. The deliberate, or not, memory gap invents a history and geography for the island to the extent that it reconstructs, *a posteriori*, something that had never been constructed, that never *was*, in the first place.

The fake, or not, respect for the unrepresentable locus of Utopia has kept the country impervious to the eye. The non-verbal act of coughing or whispering subverts the communicability of oral communication – speaking, hearing. On the other hand, the act of recording the episode through writing transforms the whole scene into something 'natural' therefore meaningful. To the reader, *writing about* the cough in the prefatory letters seems less irrational than the cough itself as an extravagant but *real* cause of interference in the discussion. Writing has rendered the scene credible. The very elaboration of the incident makes it seem too detailed (or too 'perfect') to be unreal – 'one could not possibly have made all that stuff up', we are led to think – thereby creating a precedent for prefabricating the authenticity of subsequent accounts.

Giles' hilarious idea that the details regarding the exact position of the island were missed because he had a fit of coughing comes as a playful response to More's own letter, in which, as E.E. Reynolds says, 'in a matter-of-fact fashion' he asks Giles 'to get some further information from Hythlodaye [sic] about the dimensions of the bridge at Amaurote...' (1978, 105). More declares that Hythlodaeus may have been mistaken about the exact length of the bridge and asks Giles to help him out since he cannot bear telling lies: 'Please recall the matter to the mind. If you agree with him [Hythlodaeus], I shall adopt the same view and think myself mistaken... I beg you, my dear Peter,... to reach Hythlodaeus and to make sure that my work includes nothing false and omits nothing true.'<sup>29</sup>

Without doubt, the feigned (?) attempt to correct fallacies and eradicate internal contradictions reinforces the verisimilitude of the story and moulds retrospectively the trustworthiness of More as well as the reliability of the humanists assigned to testify to the truthfulness and value of *Utopia*. On the other hand, the reader is left in the lurch as to figuring out how close *Utopia* is to the truth, given that we do not know exactly what 'truth' means in early modern Utopian literature.<sup>30</sup> The problem lies in the fact that we lack the 'original' (Hythlodaeus and his oral narrative) which would be able to tell us what the 'copy' is like. We only have a vague idea either about the actual content of Hythlodaeus' story or about whether he even exists. In fact, Giles mentions to Busleyden the rumour that 'he died during his travel' or 'made his way back again' to Utopia (Surtz 1965, 25/2-5), which is later contradicted

by Thomas More's own declaration in his second letter to Giles – printed exclusively with the second edition (Paris, 1517) of *Utopia* – that 'neque enim adhuc mortuus est' ('he is not yet dead'; Surtz 1965, 250/30).

Even if More is sincere, which is doubtful, how can we have access to Hythlodæus, who is cunningly associated with Greek rather than Latin scholarship? Erasmus' and Giles' intention (both playing a significant role in the final Utopian product) is to render Utopia (the book or the land) less accessible to the general public and more targeted towards the *really* learned, namely those who had acquired a more than superficial knowledge of Greek, as they knew that, during that age, 'expertise' in Greek was mainly limited to sheer name-dropping rather than signified profound and true knowledge of Greek.<sup>31</sup> In that spirit, they changed the original title in Latin – *Nusquam* – to fit the Greek model of increased difficulty or sophistication. The work was now called *Utopia*. More himself reveals that *Utopia* is 'the product of a person who, as you know, was not so well acquainted with Latin as with Greek'.<sup>32</sup> It is highly likely that Hythlodæus *is* Erasmus, after all. The former is the guiding spirit that tells us everything with regard to Utopia; the latter ushers into early sixteenth-century Europe the Greek intellectual mentality underlying what is now known as 'Erasmian Humanism'. Hythlodæus (or Erasmus) epitomises the invaluable Greek 'original' whose absence leads directly to the playful dissipation of the discrepancy between authenticity and its opposite, or reality and fiction, and the spawning of inexhaustible ambiguity surrounding *Utopia*.

In his letter to Thomas More, printed with all early editions of *Utopia* (1516-1519), Jerome Busleyden grapples with the issue of the intrinsic inaccessibility of the Utopian project as 'truly a wonderful and rare felicity, which is the rarer the more it jealously withholds itself from most and gives itself only to a rare few'.<sup>33</sup> In other words, *Utopia* is not for everyone to comprehend. The Utopian knowledge is a privilege of the Republic of Letters, those special humanists who have no problem going beyond dichotomous thinking (which, by definition, prioritises either the real over the fictional or the fictional over the real), favouring instead the ideal of the simulacrum, the fantastic but not utterly fictitious, or the 'quasi-fictional' (Chordas 2010, 10).<sup>34</sup> Busleyden, from within that humanist circle of friends, dismantles the 'fake/authentic' polarity by calling the Utopian island 'absolutissimumque simulacrum' (Surtz 1965, 32/30). He names *Utopia* a 'simulacrum' because it constitutes a written reproduction/representation of a remote original – the island of Utopia itself. It is the copy of a supposedly authentic, palpable, object. However, that authentic object is highly unlikely to exist; the society at issue is more fictional than real. Thereby, we are not dealing with a copy of an original but rather with a copy of another copy. There seems to be no real original, no reality outside More's text. Busleyden names the simulacrum 'absolutissimum' since it is not only an accurate representation of a fictive society, but, more

importantly, the ultimate simulacrum that displaces the bifurcated logic of the question 'is it real or not?' and establishes its own reality: the reality of simulation. One only needs to *read* the simulation to be able to *see* for oneself and bear witness to the full materiality of Utopia.

##### 5. *The Game of Verisimilitude and the Utopian Reality of Letter Writing*

The prefatory/postscript letters sometimes give the impression of trying too hard to convince of the Utopian society's verisimilitude. As already said, by commenting extensively and with too much precision upon the work, the humanists authenticate, in advance, its truthfulness as well as relatedness to urgent political matters. After telling Giles – in a letter which appeared only in the first two editions (1516, 1517) of *Utopia* – that there is a need for European theologians to 'betake themselves' to the island to promote the Christian faith and bring home 'the customs and laws of the Utopian people' (Surtz 1965, 29/2-5), the rhetorician John Desmarais (whose other name was Joannes Paludanus or Jean de Palude<sup>35</sup>) turns to the good old humanist game of Utopian authorship:

Utopia owes much to Hythlodæus who has made known a country unworthy of remaining unknown, [but i]ts debt is even greater to the very learned More whose pencil has very skilfully drawn it for us. In turn, not the least part of the thanks which are due to both must be shared with you: it is you who will bring into public view both Hythlodæus' discourse and More's written account.<sup>36</sup>

It appears as if the further away we went from the original source of knowledge about the Utopian island – Hythlodæus – the closer we got to the real meaning of 'copyright' in the humanist context. Hythlodæus is given credit for initially yielding information on the existence of the island, More for illustrating it, but, even more importantly, Giles for going public with it by combining More's and Hythlodæus' insights. Giles ends up getting most of the credit for *Utopia*, even though he only publishes the written account which, in turn, is based upon the prior oral account of an eye witness.

In his second letter to Peter Giles, printed exclusively with the (Paris) 1517 edition, Thomas More addresses the interdependence, or interaction, of the real and the fictitious, an interaction frequently permeating early Modern Utopian discourses. Referring to a specific reader who wondered whether the account is real or fictional, More affirms that

I do not pretend that if I had determined to write about the commonwealth and had remembered such a story as I have recounted, I should have perhaps shrunk from a fiction whereby the truth, as if smeared with honey, might a little more pleasantly slide into men's minds. But I should certainly have tempered the fiction so that... I should have prefixed some indications at least for the more learned to see through our

purpose. Thus, if I had done nothing else than impose names on ruler, river, city, and island such as might suggest to the more learned that the island was nowhere... [it] would have been much wittier than what I actually did. Unless the faithfulness of an historian had been binding on me, I am not so stupid as to have preferred to use those barbarous and meaningless names, Utopia, Anydrus, Amaurotum, and Ademus.<sup>37</sup>

More insists on the accuracy of his description of Utopia. The island is, as he claims, not fictional, otherwise why use such meaningless names as 'anydrus' or 'ademus' if he could just as well have employed more aesthetically appealing and semantically correct ones? That is a plausible argument; except, he is withholding from the reader the information that those 'meaningless' names are not at all meaningless or outlandish to a genuine reader of Greek. On the other hand, he unknowingly might be telling the truth to the extent that those 'meaningless' names were not given by him but, rather, by Erasmus and Giles. It is those two who, in fact, provided leads for the learned scholars to follow, even though More claims responsibility. More's words sound both serious *and* humorous, or ironic. According to C.S. Lewis, this is typical of Renaissance humanists who 'simply did not recognize an incommensurability between a light, ironic style and serious content' (1954, 3). In such a semi-comical climate, More acknowledges that so-called 'truth' should always come with a touch of fiction, so that it 'might a little more pleasantly slide into people's minds'. In other words, he admits to fusing fact and fiction and subsequently presenting it as 'the truth'. It could be argued that the figure of the simulacrum, as elaborated earlier, is adjacent to such a conscious or unconscious fusion, in the sense that simulation points to the fact that the fictional or imaginary is so real-like that it ends up engulfing the real, identifying with it, and eventually replacing it.

In his letter as well as in the main text of *Utopia*, More utilises such literary devices as litotes to cast a shadow over the Utopian construct and also conceptualise the simulacrum: 'Employing a litotic strategy of negating the opposite of what he affirms, More engages in a process of denial that bears all the markings of humanist satire and understatement' (Freeman 2007, 20).<sup>38</sup> For example, he argues 'I do not pretend... I should have perhaps shrunk from a fiction' in order to make the truth more palatable, which means that he is definitely willing to use fiction if that serves his purpose well. What is more, it is not necessarily a question of pretense on his part, since, as already stated, early modern truth is almost 'naturally' contaminated by fictional story telling. After all, Utopian discourse (and that certainly includes the commendatory letters at hand) is, by nature, a combination of the real and the fictional or the 'ideal'. It is 'a genre whose status as fiction is not as clear-cut as might seem at first glance: in spite of being considered fictional, it has a long and well-documented career in the material world, beginning with More's *Utopia* itself'. It occupies the 'middle ground' between fiction and nonfiction (Chordas 2010, 21).<sup>39</sup>

It is unclear whether More is trying to trick the reader into believing that the island does exist or simply refraining from disclosing more details on the nature of his narrative. Without doubt, he is pointing to the symbiotic heterogeneity of antithetical propositions. Towards the end of his letter, More classifies himself, Giles and Erasmus under the category of 'simple and credulous folk', to quickly add, however, that the three of them were not the only 'credulous' persons around when Hythlodæus was recounting the story: there were other witnesses too. Not all eye witnesses, therefore, can be charged with incredulity or naivety, since 'Raphael told his tale... to many other respectable and worthy men... If these unbelievers will not believe them either, let them go to Hythlodæus himself'.<sup>40</sup> More is, at this point, going to great lengths to persuade the reader of the authenticity of the Utopian narrative. To this purpose, as he implies, if his own authority or social stature is not to be invoked, at least other humanists' authority and stature might. In this light, what he is asking the reader to do is rely on the expertise and trustworthiness of those other people who allegedly testified with their own eyes to the materiality of Utopia through *hearing* Hythlodæus' words or *reading* his own written text.

In the early sixteenth century, trust in what an authority or humanist 'friend' has observed with his own eyes is a prerequisite for some 'truth' or reality to be established. Trust lends, in an artificial, retrospective mode, validity to one's words and anticipates the verisimilitude of the stories and episodes to be narrated. In this context, what I have generally argued in this essay is that sight 'almost' creates the real in the early Renaissance. More specifically, I have talked about how the simulation of the epistemological methods of eye witnessing and on-the-spot-observation in the prefatory/postscript letters to More's *Utopia* reinforces, in advance or retrospectively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society and the materiality of the island. If eye witnessing produces the real, then, the act of reading a text, as a simulation of eye witnessing, produces reality too. In that sense, to read *Utopia* and the related letters amounts to placing one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as reading simulates seeing with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

<sup>1</sup> In this article, I am using the 1965 Yale edition of *Utopia*, edited by Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter, not only for its excellent translation of the Latin original but also because it comprises the entirety of the paratextual letters published with the early editions (1516-1519) of the text. The Yale edition will hereafter be identified as 'Surtz 1965'. All references to the work will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> The early Latin editions of *Utopia* were five: Louvain, 1516; Paris, 1517; Basel, March 1518; Basel, November 1518; Florence, 1519. The March 1518 edition was the last in which Thomas More had a direct hand. The first edition contained a 'woodcut of Utopia' by an anonymous artist, a 'Utopian alphabet', 'the Tetrastichon', 'Hexastichon Anemolii', 'Giles' letter to Busleyden', 'Desmarais' letter and poem', 'Geldenhauer's poem', 'Schrijver's poem', 'Busleyden's

letter to More', and 'Praefatio: More's letter to Giles'. The second edition was enriched with a letter by the French scholar Budé as well as a second letter by More to Giles, but there is no map of Utopia, an alphabet, or a Tetrastichon. The third edition (March 1518) presents a mixture of the first and the second, but with a few additions. Herein we will find Erasmus' first prefatory contribution in the form of a letter to Froben, the woodcut of Utopia (which was left out in the Paris edition) in its more sophisticated version by Hans Holbein, another woodcut of the interlocutors in *Utopia* and the newly reinserted Hexastichon, Utopian Alphabet and Tetrastichon. Nonetheless, what is missing is More's second letter to Giles – a letter that was exclusive to the second edition. This time, there is a postscript section which includes Busleyden's letter to More as well as the poems (or, rather, epigrams) by Gerhard Geldenhauer and Cornelis de Schrijver. One can surmise that the third edition aspires to produce a more comprehensive outlook of Utopia's status and a more convincing picture of the island's verisimilitude, while Erasmus' complicity in the evocation of an atmosphere of realism and scientificity is obvious. The fact that this edition does not retain More's second letter to Giles may be symptomatic of the former's gradual withdrawal from the work as its primary 'author' and perhaps a way to demonstrate how Utopia was not 'created' by an 'author' but constantly negotiated by the different editors. The fourth edition of *Utopia* was identical to the third one, while the fifth edition (Florence, 1519) followed in the footsteps of the third (March 1518), except that it omitted both Erasmus' and Budé's letters as well as the woodcuts and the Utopian alphabet.

<sup>3</sup> For example, it is worth looking at the work done on the paratextual category of the 'prologue' in early modern drama by Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann in their *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre. Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (2004). Bruster and Weimann investigate prologues as blurry thresholds or rites of passage that are indispensable for entering the specific world of a play. See my review of this (Aretoulakis 2006). Genette distinguishes between 'epitext' and 'peritext', the former supposedly fulfilling the promotional needs of a book and the latter encompassing everything that is not *strictly* textual. He, however, concentrates upon the functions of 'those peritexts that open the book, collapsing the paratextual into the prefatory', according to Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (2011, 6). In my essay, I want to focus on the peritextual dimension of the letters accompanying *Utopia*. Those letters define or determine the reader's awareness of the cultural specificity of the text, but they also initiate an experiential procedure: that of reading *Utopia* as a simulation of an actual land. How this 'simulation' operates will be analysed later on.

<sup>4</sup> The recent study *Thomas More's 'Utopia' in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts* by Terence Cave (2008) demonstrates that the powerfulness of *Utopia's* paratexts lies in their (re)moveable quality and their ephemerality: a new edition of the work usually came with novel paratextual material or a rearranged one. According to Cave, the transportable nature of More's project created inexhaustible possibilities of knowledge transfer. The transportability of *Utopia* was also associated with the fact that it was translated in many different European languages during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The translations usually affected the content of the paratextual material. In 1548, both books I and II of *Utopia* were translated for the first time in a vernacular language – in Italian. Anton Francesco Doni and Ortensio Lando, editor and translator respectively, removed much of the original paratext in the Italian version printed in Venice – then, the printing 'capital' of the European continent. *Utopia* was translated into English for the first time by Ralph Robinson in 1551. This first English version was divested of most of the original paratext. It was only accompanied by More's first letter to Peter Giles as well as by a letter dedicating the translation to William Cecil who was, at the time, secretary to Edward VI. *Utopia's* adaptability to historical and political conjuncture is also revealed by the fact that in the second English edition, in 1556, there is no such letter to Cecil but to the 'general reader', while other paratextual material is also included. According to Cave, the withdrawal of the letter to Cecil reflects the transformation of the political and religious regime in England from Protestantism to Catholicism during the reign of Queen Mary. See also Pincombe and

Almasi (2012, 11), on the question of the inherent transitoriness of the Utopian paratext through the continuous act of re-editing and re-translating the work. An important contribution to the more general question of the *material* letter in Early Modern England is made by James Daybell (2012), who treats the letter in its pure physicality, as an object with physical features that have to be investigated thoroughly, but also more broadly, as a 'social materiality (or "sociology") of texts' encapsulating 'the social and cultural practices' of letters and the 'material conditions and contexts in which they were produced, disseminated and consumed'. Daybell is less interested in the strict literariness of (manuscript) letters than in their physical and social situatedness as objects of a wide range of transactions; he argues that letter-writing was a 'layered, collaborative, multi-stage process' rather than a simplistic 'two-way exchange between sender and reader fixed to a historically specific moment' (230). This idea helps better conceptualize Cave's insight that the prefatory letters to *Utopia* are important *precisely* in their (re)moveability, ephemerality, as well as physical locatedness rather than in their allegedly inherent literariness and content.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to state here that there was no postscript (or 'postludial') paratextual material in the very first edition of *Utopia*: in the beginning all the material was prefatory.

<sup>6</sup> Marchitello (1997, 73) elaborates the role of maps as means for establishing truths by insinuating also that reading could be viewed as a simulacrum of 'scientific' testimony: 'In fact, precisely because maps are *texts*... reading maps is a highly technical and artificial activity... Maps never simply *mean* anything but rather mean something only by virtue of being read. Reading scientific maps, then, is an act of interpretation.' Refer also to Harley and Woodward (1987) and McKenzie (1986). Poststructuralist criticism (Harley 1989) has discussed the centrality of cartography in the articulation as well as perpetuation of Renaissance power.

<sup>7</sup> By contrast to the Renaissance, medieval Europe was basically an oral culture, which means that speaking and hearing were the dominant means of communication and knowledge: 'What we now call medieval literature was produced... for a "hearing not a reading public". Reading often took place aloud' (Briggs and Burke 2002, 10).

<sup>8</sup> It was not only the emergence of typography but also the religious reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that contributed to the dissemination of reading and the growing popularity of the reading practice as a trustworthy vehicle of information and truthful meaning. Protestantism associated book reading with the holy act of reaching out to God. See Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 31-32; Parkes 1991, 259-262; Kintgen 1996; Eisenstein 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Yoran (2005, 10) argues how 'prominent northern humanists, including Erasmus, Guillaume [William] Bude, Peter Giles... understood Utopia as a work that represented the basic humanist values... [while their] comments tended to underscore the verisimilitude of the work'. See also Allen 1963, 99-107. Judith P. Jones explains that 'the involvement of so many prominent European scholars in the publication of *Utopia*... reminds us that the humanist scholars of the early sixteenth century constituted a literary network very much interested in perpetuating itself' (1979, 60). In this sense, by commenting upon the work they were actually commenting upon themselves as members of an 'inherently elitist' rhetorical culture of *reading* and learning (Betteridge 2005, 106).

<sup>10</sup> Humanism, both in its Italian civic form as well as later in its Christian version in Northern Europe, shifted away from medieval scholasticism and the Aristotelian conception of science that favoured the reduction of reality to universal ideas, and espoused instead a vision of the world as an autonomous entity contingent upon the individual activity of interpretation or communication. However, there are many differences between Italian humanism and its northern European ramifications. As Crane suggests (2003, 13-26), Italian humanism, which appeared 'much earlier than its first beginnings in England', is frequently seen 'as "pagan" in contrast to the Christian humanism of the northern Renaissance, because it grew out of opposition to the logical, exegetical and stylistic practices of the late medieval church and because it advocated a return to classical texts without sharing to the same extent northern concerns to make them compatible with Christianity'.

<sup>11</sup> Alistair Fox (1983, 4) provides essential details on the humanism wave: 'From as early as 1488, Erasmus... had systematically promoted a program for reform based on the ideals and practices of Renaissance humanism... The term *humanist* was used to refer to teachers and students of classical learning and literature, particularly to those who favored a new curricular emphasis on grammar, rhetoric, ethics, history, and poetry as studied in the classical texts of Greece and Rome rather than the old Scholastic emphasis on logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics.' See also, Kinney 1986; Wooden and Wall 1985; Camporeale 1972.

<sup>12</sup> W.T. Cotton (2003, 45) touches upon humanist friendship when he talks about a 'near-conspiracy of letter writing' and a game play with regard to More's project. It is necessary to state here that humanist friendship was probably not unconditional, because it 'only ever really existed between educated, wealthy men', 'despite the humanist insistence that social position and wealth had little to do with true friendship' (Betteridge 2005, 106).

<sup>13</sup> John Freeman (2007, 3) refers to the Latin motto 'a friend is another self' to explain how between 'friends' there is no point in trying to decipher *Utopia's* real authorship.

<sup>14</sup> The 'Republic of Letters' flourished within the 'sociointellectual space' of Erasmian humanism, which gave it 'a considerable measure of independence', whereas most other humanist groups were connected to a social or a political establishment... reflect[ing] a hegemonic ideology', like in 'monarchical Naples', 'theocratic Rome', and later 'in the great monarchies of northern Europe' (Yoran 2005, 27).

<sup>15</sup> 'MORO autem homini per se graui, & autoritate magna subnixo, fidem plane ut habeam, efficit Petri Aegidij Hantuerpiensis testimonium, quem uirum nunquam coram a me cognitum (mitto nunc doctrinae morumque commendationem) eo nomine amo quod ERASMI clarissimi uiri ac de literis sacris, profanis, omneque genus meritissimi, amicus est iuratissimus, quicum etiam ipso iamdiu societatem amicorum contraxi literis ultro citroque obsignatis' (Surtz 1965, 12/29-14/7).

Budé's contribution to the second edition constituted a very strong recommendation for *Utopia* given that his 'reputation, at this time, far outstripped that of any of the previous contributors...' (Allen 1963, 97).

<sup>16</sup> Erasmus is the glue that sticks international educated men together; the lynchpin of the northern humanist republic of letters without which apparently no friendship, interaction and, eventually, letter exchange would have been possible. But Erasmus also appears to be a man who is cunningly working on friendship formation as a platform for networking, which allows for the creation of retrospective trust: between friends, that is, anything can be argued or believed, even if that involves the scenario of testifying to the real existence of a fictional country, or, more radically, distorting the status of the real itself. Richard Whitford, Erasmus' and More's common friend, had made, even before 1506, a remark on how similar those two were to each other, 'such that twin brothers could not more closely resemble one another' (Surtz 1965, Ixxiii). Erasmus 'made a career out of networking, strategic publication and friendships with other prominent humanists all over Europe (including John Colet and Thomas More in England)' (Crane 2003, 17). Refer also to Jardine 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Erasmus' explicit contribution to the third edition of *Utopia* in the form of a letter to Froben, a very well-established printer in Northern Europe, is important because 'by 1518 Erasmus was the most famous, most respected, most sought-after scholar in Europe...' (Allen 1963, 98).

<sup>18</sup> 'uerum ego Vtopiam extra mundi cogniti fines sitam esse percunctando comperi, insulam nimirum fortunatam, Elysijs fortasse campis proximam, (nam Hythlodaeus nondum situm eius finibus certis tradidit ut Morus ipse testator)... Eius igitur insulae cognitionem THOMAE MORO debemus, qui beatae uitae exemplar, ac uiuendi praescriptum aetate nostra promulgauit, ab Hythlodaeo, ut ipse tradit, inuentum, cui omnia fert accepta. qui ut Vtopianis ciuitatem architectatus sit... MORVS certe insulam & sancta instituta stilo orationeque illustrauit... etiamsi in ea opera nauanda sibi tantum partes structoris uendicauit' (Surtz 1965, 12/1-21).

<sup>19</sup> Postmodern theory has posited the substitution of the sign for any so-called 'natural' reality behind it. The simulacrum, or simulation, exemplifies such an attitude. The French thinker Jean Baudrillard talks about the possibility of taking as an allegory of simulation a Borges tale where 'the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory... [which] no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory' (1983, 1-2).

<sup>20</sup> 'SUPERIORIBUS hisce diebus ornatissime Buslidi, misit ad me THOMAS ille MORVS, te quoque teste, cui notissimus est, dignum huius aetatis nostrae decus, Vtopaim insulam, paucis adhuc mortalibus cognitam, sed dignam in primis, quam ut plusquam Platonice omneis uelint cognoscere, aliquanto plus mihi uidere uidear, quam cum ipsum Raphaelem Hythlodaeum (nam ei sermoni aequae interfui ac MORVS ipse) sua uerba sonantem audirem. Etiam si uir ille... ut facile appareret eum non ea referre, quae narrantibus alijs didicisset, sed quae cominus hausisset oculis, & in quibus non exiguum tempus esset uersatus' (Surtz 1965, 20/15-26).

<sup>21</sup> 'The quest for knowledge becomes at the same time the quest for the *seen*... The methods of this epistemology came to valorize the *demonstration* over the meditation or philosophical speculation' (Marchitello 1997, 12). This excerpt actually refers to the early seventeenth century, but traces of demonstration-valorizing visualism can already be found in the early sixteenth-century discourse of *Utopia*. In fact, the transition from the very simple anonymous woodcut of Utopia in the first edition to a much more sophisticated and detailed map in the third edition is typical of prioritising seeing and individual perspective. At the bottom left-hand corner of Holbein's map one discerns two figures talking, Hythlodaeus and More, observed from afar by another, probably John Clement, who stands on the right. Whereas in the 1516 anonymous map there was sheer, unwitnessed, territory, in the 1518 map there are people narrating what is simultaneously being shown in the background. This subjective human narrative reminds the spectator of the importance of the eye and individual perspective in the interpretation of geographical representation. The presence of the humanists in Holbein's map plays a central role in the production and conveyance of the reality of Utopia. For an analysis of the differences between the first and the second map, see Kinney 2005, 35. In any case, the existence of a map of Utopia is meant to signify that there has got to be a place by that name.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on *Utopia's* potential impact on Rastell's mind, see Geritz and Laine's biography of John Rastell 1983, Devereux 1976, 119-123 and Knapp 1992. Knapp may actually be going too far by jumping to the conclusion that 'More's overtly fictional new world inspired Rastell to seek a real one' (21). For information on the credibility of reports on the New World as well as the interference of fiction with such reports, refer to Campbell 1991 and 1999.

<sup>23</sup> '... Raphaelem ipsum minus in ea insula uidisse per omne quinquennium quod illic egit, quam in MORI descriptione uidere liceat' (Surtz 1965, 22/5-7).

<sup>24</sup> 'Nam neque nobis in mentem uenit quaerere, neque illi dicere, qua in parte noui illius orbis Vtopia sita sit. Quod non fuisse praetermissum sic... quo in mari sit insula de qua tam multa recenseam...' (Surtz 1965, 40/33-42/4).

<sup>25</sup> 'siquidem cum ea loqueretur Raphael, adierat MORVM e famulis quispiam, qui illi nescio quid diceret in aurem, ac mihi quidem tanto attentius auscultanti, comitum quispiam, clarius, ob frigus opinor, nauigatione collectum, tussiens, dicentis uoces aliquot interceptit. Verum non conquescam... si modo incolumis est noster Hythlodaeus' (Surtz 1965, 22/25-32).

<sup>26</sup> Giovanni Della Casa (1953, 342) makes note of the base quality of 'some kind of men that in coughing and sneezing make such noise that they make a man deaf to hear them', a statement that is not exactly praising More's and Giles' company. Apparently Giles and More are playing on the notion of the 'serious' gentleman or 'humanist'.

<sup>27</sup> '... cui tantum errant ea recitanda, quae tecum una partier audiui narrantem Raphaelem. quare nec erat quod in eloquendo laboraretur... & mea oratio quanto accederet propius ad illius neglectam simplicitatem, tanto future sit propior ueritati, cui hac in re soli curam & debeo & habeo... uti sic simpliciter scriberentur audita, nihil erat negocij' (Surtz 1965, 38/7-22).

<sup>28</sup> Rhenanus' letter reads: 'Quod diceret ea omnia ex Hythlodaei ore excepta, & a Moro tantum in literas missa' (Surtz 1965, 252/26-27), ['... all More said was taken from the mouth of Hythlodaeus and merely written down by More'].

<sup>29</sup> 'Ego te rogo rem ut reuocēs in memoriā. Nam sit u cum illo sentis, ego quoque adsentiar & me lapsū credam... te oro mi Petre... compelles Hythlodaeum, atque efficias, ne quicquam huic operi meo, aut insit falsi, aut ueri desyderetur' (Surtz 1965, 40/23-25-42/14-17).

<sup>30</sup> *Utopia* is quite similar to sixteenth-century travel narratives. However, if More's work is so convincing in presenting a fake society as if it were absolutely true and authentic, the question arises as to whether 'real' early modern travel narratives' claim to objectivity and truth is justified, given that '[t]rauellers may lie by authority' according to William Parry, a man who supposedly travelled to Persia towards the end of the sixteenth century and recorded his experiences in a book (1601, sig. A3').

<sup>31</sup> '[I]t remained true in Italy as well as in England that claims about the importance of Greek learning often exceeded actual knowledge of the Greek language and its literature' (Crane 2003, 15).

<sup>32</sup> 'non perinde Latine docti quam Graece' (Surtz 1965, 38/11-12).

<sup>33</sup> '... raraque felicitas, ac plane eo rarior, quo magis ipsa sese inuidens plurimis, non praebet nisi raris' (Surtz 1965, 32/21-23).

<sup>34</sup> Chordas employs the term 'quasi-fiction' to talk about forms that, 'though clearly fictional, nevertheless masquerade as "verite"' (2010, 10). The notion of simulation may be bordering on the 'quasi-fictional'.

<sup>35</sup> It is unclear why Paludanus'/ Desmarais' letter was left out of the third edition of *Utopia*. It has been argued that the reason was that the more 'exciting' names of Erasmus and Budé were preferred. See Allen 1963, 96.

<sup>36</sup> 'Multum debet Vtopia Hythlodeo per quem innotuit indigna quae nesciretur. Plus erudissimo Moro, cuius penicillo nobis tam scite depicta est. porro quod vtrique debetur gratiae, eius non minima pars tibi secunda est, qui & illius sermonem, & huius scriptum in lucem emisit... (Surtz 1965, 28/3-8). Desmarais' previous injunction that the island be christianised, and thus colonized, resembles an epigram to *Utopia* by Cornelis de Schrijver in which the author puts the work in colonialist and fully materialist perspective by representing the newly discovered world as a country that needs to be gazed at for its marvels to be discerned: 'Do you want to see new marvels now that a new world has been discovered not long ago?' ('Vis noua monstra, nouo dudum nunc orbe reperto'); Surtz 1965, 30/11). Schrijver is straightforwardly inviting the reader to witness the new marvels with his own eyes, by means of seeing/reading the book as a way of simulating on-the-spot-observation. Reading the book amounts to actually bearing witness to, and believing, its represented reality. The injunction to 'see new marvels' increases the believability of More's text, given that *Utopia* is located in the New World, America, which was actually 'discovered' by Columbus twenty-five years before the publication of *Utopia*. In this light, if America is real, so must *Utopia*.

<sup>37</sup> 'Neque tamen inficias eo si de republica scribere decreuissem, ac mihi tamen venisset in mentem talis fabulae, non fuisse fortassis abhorriturum ab ea fictione qua velut melle circumlitum suauiuscule influeret in animos verum. At certe sic temperassem tamen... Itaque si nihil aliud ac nomina saltem principis... non sum tam stupidus vt barbaris illis vt nominibus & nihil significantibus, Vtopiae, Anydri, Amauroti, Ademi voluissem' (Surtz 1965, 250/5-18).

<sup>38</sup> For the use of litotes in *Utopia* refer to McCutcheon 1971, 107-121 and Nagel 1973, 173-180.

<sup>39</sup> Even the fictional More, the character inside *Utopia*, 'makes explicit the notion that reality or truth is a kind of fiction, a "fabula"' (Perlette 1987, 248).

<sup>40</sup> 'Raphael non mihi modo ac tibi illa sed multis preterea honestissimis viris atque grauissimis nescio an plura adhuc & maiora... quod si ne hijs quidem increduli isti credant Hythlodaeum adeant ipsum licet' (Surtz 1965, 250/26-30).

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# *Epistolary Networks*



# The Pragmatics of Sir Thomas Bodley's Diplomatic Correspondence

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## *Abstract*

The publication of the diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Bodley online (Diplomatic Correspondence of Thomas Bodley, 1585-1597) offers a fine opportunity to study a text-type that is partly different from either business letters or personal correspondence. These texts lend themselves to be analysed from a sociopragmatic and discourse-analytic point of view, and this will be attempted in the article by taking a closer look at the management of conflict, the degree of strength and directness of speech acts, and the ways in which social hierarchy is expressed. Several linguistic markers will be considered, in order to ascertain which elements can be seen as typically sensitive indicators in this particular text type, and how they relate to those found in other types of correspondence from the same period, which has been widely studied. In particular, the interplay between 'diplomatic' indirectness (also in the modern sense) and direct reinforcement of personal bonds will be investigated; given the need to continuously express the element of personal trust, this type of correspondence seems particularly promising to analyse from this specific angle. Interesting insight can be gained by looking at the performing of specific acts or 'moves', for instance at the different levels of strength in directives, or at the linguistic means used to convey degrees of certainty in the reporting of information, both types of acts that figure prominently in these letters.

*Keywords:* Address, Correspondence, Epistemic Values, Face-Work, Pragmatics

## 1. *Introduction*

The present article is a pilot study on a collection of texts that has recently been made available online, i.e. the archive of diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Bodley;<sup>1</sup> the study employs a historical sociopragmatic perspective (Culpeper 2010), as has already been done for other types of correspondence (see 1.1 below). Specific linguistic elements such as terms of address and verbs of reporting are analysed here with special attention to two lines of investigation: 1) the construction of the relations between correspondents; 2) the negotiation of roles and the expression of epistemic and deontic values in the main content area of the letters, i.e. the passing on of instructions and sensitive pieces of information.

### 1.1 *Methodological Foundations*

Research combining pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to texts from the past increasingly looks at networks and small groups, or even at individual text-producers, to trace patterns of expression and linguistic recurrences that may be indicative of their communicative styles and strategies. It is also increasingly frequent to look at the sociopragmatic make up of text types, in order to highlight conventions and patterns that were employed within a community of practice or a specific social group (see reviews of relevant studies in Culpeper 2010; Conde Silvestre 2012). This article combines the two approaches by looking at a specific text-type produced by a small number of individuals who were in close correspondence with each other, and whose relations are based on personal trust, but also on a hierarchy of socio-political roles.

Sociopragmatic studies on English letters have developed in the last fifteen years, especially with the compilation of several specialised corpora and with the publication of collections of correspondence,<sup>2</sup> which enabled both macro-sociohistorical studies (e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003) and the application to letters of network analysis (Bergs 2000; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000; Fitzmaurice 2002). In spite of their being a heterogeneous text-type, letters are perceived as interesting for the pragmatician and for the historical sociolinguist precisely because they often contain a mixture of personal topics and other elements (Palander-Collin 2010, 652-653).

Diplomatic correspondence can be considered in itself a sub-text-type, as argued by Okulska (2006), who studied the development of this type of document in Late Middle English and Early Modern English within a Functional Sentence Perspective framework, especially with regard to what she terms the 'narrative report letter'. In that article, which does not include or mention Bodley's correspondence, the thematic progression and the linguistic devices used in diplomatic letters to convey knowledge and subjective stance are analysed; therefore, the article will be repeatedly quoted in what follows. The present article's approach, however, draws also from similar contributions on later materials (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2006; Fitzmaurice 2006), in that markers of stance and politeness will be looked at more closely than narrative schemata (see below, section 3).

### 1.2 *The Historical Context and Background of the Corpus*

The diplomatic correspondence corpus used for this article mainly consists of two types of letters: 1) those exchanged between Bodley and the representative of the Court of the Company of Merchant Adventurers; 2) those exchanged between Bodley and Queen Elizabeth I or her chief advisors: William Cecil, Baron Burghley, Secretary of State and then Lord High Treasurer, and Francis Walsingham, Chief Secretary and head of Elizabeth's 'intelligence service'.

The Company of Merchant Adventurers of London was founded in the late Middle Ages, and was for a long time chartered by the English monarchy to trade abroad, especially in Antwerp. In the late sixteenth century, they were in conflict with the Hanseatic League, and were therefore directly involved in Bodley's diplomatic work in the Low Countries, where they wanted to keep their privileges as cloth sellers. Letters were exchanged on diplomatic negotiations and on the status of the Company, particularly between Bodley and some of the deputy governors of the Company, notably Thomas Ferrers, Edward Norrys, George Setherson, and John Wheler.<sup>3</sup>

The roles of Burghley and Walsingham were of course of higher relevance, as both were directly connected with the Queen and involved in the negotiations with the Low Countries to support the Protestant revolt against Spain, and were also protective of the Merchants' interests. Walsingham was more direct in advocating his political position, while Burghley was more 'diplomatic' in the modern sense. This led to differences in the ways they wrote their diplomatic letters, in their expression of stance, and of course also in Bodley's responses.

Bodley was sent by Elizabeth on various missions, first to the kings of Denmark and France, and later to the Low Countries, to negotiate the Queen's support to the Protestant revolts. His diplomatic career was however not totally successful or devoid of conflict, and therefore he later resigned. The States General, i.e. the union of the Protestant provinces that demanded higher religious freedom of the Spanish crown, often ignored Bodley's requests, and the long debates were frequently unproductive, also due to the fact that Elizabeth required a naval embargo, which threatened to disrupt mercantile interests. Caught in a very difficult position, Bodley grew increasingly frustrated with his mission, while his interlocutors were demanding results he could not produce. All this makes of his diplomatic correspondence a particularly interesting object of study.

### 1.3 *The Sample*

For the purpose of the present article, which constitutes a first exploration of the material, only 100 letters were analysed, all from the Bodleian Library Archive. They are almost equally divided into letters from and letters to Bodley. The majority are exchanges between Bodley and his superiors, i.e. Burghley and Walsingham, and cover the years 1588 to 1595, thus giving a wide perspective on the progression of the missions. They cluster around specific dates, so that there is some content continuity – in some cases, more than one letter written (or received) on the same day was selected, so as to get some impression of the initiating-response dynamics, or to see how the same topic was presented in different letters.

## 2. *The Sociopragmatics of Sir Thomas Bodley*

In a way, the collection of letters is very content-oriented, in that its main purpose is to keep the flow of information active from Queen Elizabeth I to Sir William Burghley to Bodley and vice-versa, and between the representatives of the Council of Merchants and Bodley, as mentioned in the previous section. In this sense, the letters reveal detailed information about the diplomatic processes and exchanges he was involved in. The transmission of information is however only one level of discourse, which is highly relevant also to historical studies and to cultural history. Another important aspect of this correspondence is the maintenance and reinforcing of relationships, which is explored in the next sub-section.

### 2.1 *Opening in Style: Salutations and Terms of Address*

The first linguistic element that was studied for the present article is the category of salutations and terms of address, which were thought to give insight into the way in which the relationships between correspondents are conveyed, relationships that are usually asymmetric as for status. In former times, letter writing was still partly a 'technical' or semi-professional skill, which was mostly acquired through manuals. Some forms of expression in correspondence are therefore highly conventionalised, but show nevertheless enough variation as to be interesting for our studies (Palander-Collin 2010, 660).

Salutations and other forms of direct address<sup>4</sup> are among the most 'interactive' parts of the letter, since they are instrumental to conveying the relationship existing between the correspondents, and can also be the locus for *captatio benevolentiae*, conveyed through honorifics and deferential expressions. Since the main objective of diplomatic relations is that of keeping face needs satisfied, so that further negotiation is not hindered and allegiance not questioned, those expressions that aim at preserving personal relations, beside and beyond the professional or hierarchical relations, are bound to be particularly frequent and pragmatically sensitive.

The openings of diplomatic letters (including salutations and some initial clauses) seem to become less elaborate and less formal from Late Middle English to Early Modern English, while still including highly formulaic phrases; they increasingly seem to establish some elements of common ground, through pronouns and items emphasising interactivity and reciprocity – in other words, they seem to become increasingly phatic, while maintaining their hierarchy-preserving function (Okulska 2006, 54-56).

For this part of the study, 90 letters were included, as the remaining ten are addressed to multiple or unknown recipients or came to Bodley from multiple senders. Among the letters that Bodley received, there are five by Queen Elizabeth herself; two of these (1307, 1310)<sup>5</sup> have no opening at all, while the remaining

three (0799, 0824, 0832) open with the formula *Trusty and well-beloved we greet you well*. The first two are from 1588, respectively entitled ‘instructions’ and ‘memorial’, and do in fact contain directives, with a strongly deontic stance (see section 3 below). The other three date from the following year, and are much ‘softer’ in tone and more ‘interactive’, which correlates with the presence of the opening greeting formula stressing the trust and benevolence of the Queen towards Bodley.

The most consistent form of address used by Bodley in openings is *It may / May it please your (good) L[ordship]/H[onour]*, used to address his immediate superiors, i.e. Burghley and Walsingham. Normally this is just a formula that is syntactically isolated, although in a couple of cases it is put in construction: *It may please your L. to aduertye sehir Majestie that...* (0812, 0814, 1352).

One exception to this pattern of address is (0807), where Bodley addresses Burghley through the term *Ryght Honourable my veary good Lord*. This is a reply to (0806) from Burghley to Bodley; here, Burghley does not employ any addressing formula, but the letter contains instructions and reassurance, since this is a phase in the negotiation in which Bodley is signalling insecurity and uncertainty about how to behave. This exceptional address form could therefore be a way for Bodley to exercise a form of *captatio benevolentiae* while also redressing the ‘disturbance’ he may be causing through his insecurity and his delayed results, and also confirming the hierarchical relation between them.

Although closing formulae and addressing (external to the letter proper, on the fold or ‘envelope’ part) usually include the term *friend*, accompanied by emotionally coloured adjectives such as *true, loving, good*, etc., the signalling of hierarchies is still very important in the letters. Address is thus very asymmetrical, in that, for instance, Burghley and Walsingham address Bodley with plain *Sir*<sup>6</sup> and never use any openings containing the elaborate honorifics that he employs for them. Walsingham is often addressed as *Master Secretary* (e.g. 0808), thus through his professional title, yet the reply always employs *Sir* or *Master Bodley*.

The situation is quite different in letters exchanged between Bodley and members of the Company of Merchant Adventurers. In the very few letters in our pilot study that are addressed to such people, Bodley normally uses *Sir*, and is sometimes reciprocated, but the most common term of address in openings of letters to him is *Right worshipfull* (e.g. 1123, 1132, 1370), which indicates a higher level of deference. This is to be expected, since the Merchants are hoping to profit from the outcome of the negotiations. Hence, the *captatio benevolentiae* is reversed here. The content of their letters is very often made up of pleas to take their interests into consideration, and thus it comes as no surprise that they use honorifics indicating a subordinate hierarchical status.

## 2.2 Stance-Taking in the Conveying of Knowledge

The ‘factual’ part of diplomatic letters is interspersed with linguistic elements signalling communicative intention and topic progression, but also with stance

markers and signals of evidentiality and epistemicity. The evaluation of the knowledge conveyed is often represented by frequent use of verbs of perception and cognition and by performative verbs (Okulska 2006, 53-54), but also by nominal and adjectival attributes (Okulska 2006, 65-67). While the strictly intersubjective aspect of this will be mentioned in section 3 below, in this section we will examine these portions of the letters rather with an eye to the involvement-distancing axis; the forms examined are therefore: inclusive vs. exclusive pronouns, evidential verbs and expressions, and impersonal constructions. The relevance of the former element is largely self-explanatory; impersonal forms contribute to expressing stance by 'de-personalising' or distancing claims or statements, while evidentials signal the degree of commitment of the speaker to the knowledge reported.<sup>7</sup>

As for pronouns, Bodley's letters usually display exclusiveness: the *I* and the *you* are clearly distinguished, he does however occasionally employ a plural that seems to include other officials or counsellors (only rarely mentioned by name) in the reporting of common knowledge or expectation,<sup>8</sup> as in exx. [1-3]:

[1] Howbeyt by his lettre of the 19 he replyed unto them, that thinges were now in an other estate... How this lettre is accepted *we doe not understand*: but everie man supposeth, and their manner of proceeding doth in- sinuat no lesse, but that they purpose to surrender. (1371)<sup>9</sup>

[2] And *we hope* in lyke manner to heare every hower, of some speciall attempt to be given besydes. *For our approaches*, Galleryes other mynes and workes are brought soe neere unto the Rampers in 5 or 6 places, as they were ready, it is thought about 4 dayes paste, to give upon the Towne in all those places at one instant... *Ernestus we heare doth assemble* all his forces for some speciall purpose, which is unknowne yet here, but only by conjecture, having sent already to the castell of Wo... (1374)

[3] *Our* lettres out of Brabant tell of divers discontentements in the Enemies government partly against the owld old count Mansfeld, who is hated for his rigour, and partialitie in dealing, and partly among themselves, through their factions and wantes, which *we* are in good hope, will advance *our* designes. (1113)

Letters by the Queen make of course use of the royal *we*, even though this is sometimes de-personalised through formulas such as *it is thought convenient that...* (1309). Letters by Burghley to Bodley vary much more, in that he occasionally uses *we* but in an exclusive way (probably referring to himself and the Queen, Walsingham and/or the Privy Council), in contrast with *you* referring to Bodley – this stresses the directive tone of the letters, contributing to emphasising the hierarchical distance of the relationship:

[4] although not longe before the same in other your lettres yowe gave us knowledge of the Counte Maurice gathering of divers Companies of soldiers to meete at Williamstonde, and than it was thought his purpose should be to surprise either Stenberghen,

Gertrudenberg, or Har-togenboys, soe as nowe it is fallen directlie owt to the worse sense. And because uppon the arrivall of the L. Willowghbie, and upon your lettres of the ixth of marche wee weare fullie certified of the Attempt of this siege: hir Majestie did theareupponn direct her lettres both to the States, and to yowe, to procure all good meanes to have the siege forborne... And for that convenientlie wee could not heare from yowe what hathe been done in that matter... (0809)

A reference to *we* is of course not uncommon in the letters addressed to Bodley by the deputy governors of the Company of Merchants, as in this case the sender does in fact represent a group – there are no marked instances in our pilot sample.

The use of impersonal and passive constructions conveys distance and also, secondarily, uncertainty about the strength of a claim, its source, and/or its adherence to the truth. Such forms are therefore employed in a variety of text-types as a stylistic choice which may also be interpreted as a form of hedging (the typical case, to the point of being nearly a cliché, is academic writing). This pragmatic strategy was also used in the past in rather subtle ways, aided no doubt by the fact that some cognitive and stance verbs such as *think* and *like* entered impersonal constructions and showed a different structure. The only survivor of this in Early Modern English is *methinks/methinketh*, which was on its way to be lexicalised as an epistemic marker when it was relatively quickly lost (López-Couso 1996; Palander-Collin 1999). This expression is rather marginal in our sub-sample, since *me thinkes* is used only once by Bodley (0831) and *me thinketh* is used twice by Burghley in letters to Bodley (1120, 1382) – thus, it is never spelt as one word (one of the signs of lexicalisation), and it is not prominent as an epistemic and stance marker in this part of the correspondence. Moreover, in one of the examples it seems to be used more as a hedge or face-work element (in order to soften a negative, rebuking remark) rather than as a marker of actual uncertainty:

[5] I did wryte unto you as particularlie as I mighte of the succors which hir Majestie required of the States, and yet me thincketh you still stande in dowbt what is the determination of the Quene. (1382)

*It*-structures and passive constructions producing distance in the reporting of knowledge are also very frequent; among the most common are *It is (generally)<sup>10</sup> thought* [that X will happen] (0802, 0812, 1351 and others); *As is/was thought/so it is thought* (1095, 1371);<sup>11</sup> *It is (generally) feared* (0820, 1353); *It is bruted abroade* (1124);<sup>12</sup> *It is certified* (0840); *It should appear* (0836); *It is conceived* (1115); *It is to be presumed* (1097).

Notice the contrast between general opinion and personal belief in [6], and the distance-taking effect in [7], followed by an admission of ignorance:

[6] *It is every mans opinion*, that some speciall good will come of yt, & the common people will be greatly hartened when [the] shall see hir Majestyes care of theyr welfare

so graciously continewed. Moreover *I am fully perswaded* that the deputyes gon for England ar so weakly authorised... (0831; Bodley to Burghley)

[7] For /whether/ it be her Majesties meaning, *as it seemeth* sometimes, not to leave these contreis unpro- tected, howsoever in their rudenes they deale un- worthely with her: or whether she be resolved, if they will not come to reason, to seeke her securitie, by some other kinde of course, because *I knowe it not*, and because I see some actions sometimes bende one way, and others at an other time repugnant. (0842; Bodley to Walsingham)

It can be noticed that these expressions have different strength in reporting knowledge, with several degrees of certainty or reliability being incorporated not only in the verbs (compare the difference in the meanings of *presumed* vs. *certified*, for instance) but also in surrounding elements, e.g. the adverb *generally* and/or the accompanying modals, conveying the epistemic values and also the width of this knowledge. One effect all these forms have in common is the de-personalisation of the reporting of information, although occasionally some elements of personalisation are included as Indirect Objects or complements, as in [8] and [9], where the subjectivity or partiality of knowledge are highlighted. Similar expressions are: *it was not sygnefied to me* (1381), *It was doubted (by some others)* (1095, 1118), *It is told me for certeyn by Count Maurice...* (0837)

[8] ... that thereby *yt may appear unto you*, what hathe been in use heretofore, and what yt is we desire at this instant: namely: that the Tare may be made in one Towne. (1370; Ferrers to Bodley)

[9] ... *as I doe suspecte* that it is but geven awaye out to towle them faster forward which parhaps they thinke the Rather bycause *Nothinge is writtene of thos shipes unto me...* (1381; Bodley to Burghley)

In these and similar cases, there is a combination between the distancing signalled by the *it*-structure and a personalisation indicated by the direct involvement of the recipient of the information and/or the pinpointing of the source of the information. These cases are however a minority, since the majority of such occurrences in the pilot sample are of the type [6], i.e. without personal reference.

Evidentials are very frequent in the sample, in co-occurrence with representative speech acts (transmission of knowledge) and, in general, with contexts where there is stance-taking with regards to knowledge. To these we can add cognitive verbs and other elements that contribute to conveying degree of certainty.<sup>13</sup> In many cases, this involves forms that are similar to those used in passive or impersonal structures, only used personally; of course, given the nature of these letters, the majority of instances are in the first person. Again,

they seem to stand at different levels on an epistemic scale; the most common are *for ought I can perceive* (0821, 1351, and others); *I suppose* (1377); *I think* (0064, 0812, and others);<sup>14</sup> *I trust* (0836, 1135); *I am/was in some doubt* (1381); *I do not doubt / I do not doubt but* (1379/0831, 0835); *as I am informed* (1379, 1381); *(as far as) I (can/may) conjecture* (0791/1095, 1381); *as I suspect* (0797). As can be seen, this area also presents considerable variation, not least in the way in which the predicates are hedged and qualified; some recurring modified forms are *I am always uncertene* (1372); *I am certainly/fully/thorowly persuaded* (0812, 1379/0814/1116); *I doe wonder verye much* (1381);<sup>15</sup> *I do rayther presume* (1382); *I do very much suspect* (0812). This hedging mostly seems to be inserted for politeness considerations (e.g. in [10], where it occurs within a complaint) or to signal epistemic downtoning (i.e. increasing uncertainty margins, as in [11]).

[10] which I am urged the more to complayne of, for that *I stand in a manner assured*, had hir Majesties lettres have bin delivered in tyme at the firste I might have bin able to have diverted this course that hath bin taken... (1351; Bodley to Burghley)

[11] *I doe not perceave* that they goe about to make answer, and *I am half persuaded*, that they will passe it over in silence. (0840; Bodley to Walsingham)

Here, again, Bodley is conveying a number of shades in transmitting knowledge, but also in interpreting his role. He is careful in giving the right impression about how reliable his information is,<sup>16</sup> and in expressing his perplexities about the instructions he receives. In fact, the number of tentative expressions is far higher than that of expressions indicating assurance, and this is a clear symptom of (or may even have concurred to cause) the unsuccessfulness of some stages of Bodley's mission, and the dissatisfaction of his superiors with him. The linguistic expressions involved in this dynamics are explored in the next section.

### 3. *Epistemic and Deontic Values in Face-Work*

A large part of the content of the correspondence under analysis is made up of two different types of 'communicative moves': instructions, that are given, taken, discussed or negotiated, and the reporting of knowledge, with information (including dialogues) passed on, reported, interpreted, and assessed, as mentioned in the previous section. There is however also a strong emphasis on 'face-work' in conveying the maintenance of a hierarchy between the interlocutors, and a strong deontic focus in the passing of directions and in emphasising needs and obligations, though within a relatively formalised structure and with the intervention of politeness considerations (already referred to in 2.1 above). Only a few examples can be qualitatively analysed

within this article, but they are pretty indicative of the type of dynamics that the diplomatic letters enact.

The first group of letters in the subsample in temporal order come from Elizabeth herself, Walsingham and Burghley, who in turn send instructions to Bodley. The tone is relatively imposing, stressing the deontic dimension: this is conveyed through heavy use of the modal *shall*, which at the time still carried a shade of its original meaning indicating obligation, but was quickly transforming into a marker of futurity<sup>17</sup> [12]; *should*, which still retains that shade today, is also prominent [13]:

[12] *Our pleasure* therefore is that you *shall* deale... (1307)

[13] *wee thinck* it therefore verye convenient that you *should* at your arrival there enforme your selfe... (1307)

Of the three interlocutors, Walsingham is the one using the highest level of politeness [14], through using a less deontically strong element, i.e. the request predicate *pray*; in his replies, Bodley employs the even more deferential *beseech* (e.g. 0797).

[14] And therefore I *pray* yow to presse the sayd Count... (1313)

In the letters immediately following (0802, 0804, Feb 1589), Bodley expresses his first doubts and failures to Burghley, and gets some reassurance from Walsingham [15-16] – levels of deference are increased on both sides:

[15] ... as *I neede not be troublesome* in that behalf, but only *signifie*, that it was *confuse*, when he departed from hens, /and/ so it doth continew... For the hindraunce wherof, *I can not readely propose any one better meanes*... and *yet it is generally thought*... And *yet it may be imagined*... (0802; Bodley to Burghley)

[16] ... though *e nothing doubting but as you have hitherto shewed your self most carefull* to further that service, so *you will continue the same to the uttermost of your power*. And for the propositions and aunswares you sent hether from thence though *e my Lords have yet no lea- sure by reason of the Parliament to consider thereof yet may you be sure they are not forgotten* but that upon the next fytt occasion *you shall receive some resolution from them touching those matters*. And so for the present I committ you to god. (0804; Walsingham to Bodley)

The next ca. 40 letters in our pilot sample cover March to June 1589 and represent, again, intensive exchanges between Bodley and his superiors. This is a phase of crisis in the mission, with Bodley increasingly complaining that he is not receiving clear directions [17-18], and his interlocutors ‘calling him to order’, rejecting the accusations of giving unclear directions, while at the same time encouraging Bodley to continue in his efforts [19]. Therefore, this

section of the subsample includes intense face-work in terms of hedging and in terms of a balance between directives and solidarity markers, in order to reaffirm the hierarchy without disrupting relationships – the sheer density of the italicised (i.e. sensitive) passages in the examples gives an idea of this tightly-knit texture:

[17] *I am forced by reason of Master Secretaries indisposition, to trouble your L. more with my lettres, then is fitte, or then I woulde, hopinge that for the better cariage of mysealfe in this ticklish state, your L. will vouchesafe me so much of your honourable favoure, as to procure me some kinde of direction and answeare to suche matters of mommente as I have delivered in my former letters & writings whearwith always recommendinge my humble searvice and dutie to your L. I cease to trouble you further.* (0807; Bodley to Burghley)

[18] In which respect *I doe expect nothinge more, then to knowe hir Majesties intention: the want whereof I must needs confesse to your L. doth Some what discourage me, as it is also a lett That I can not negotiat So effectually nor extend my service. to so many good purposes, as other wyse I might.* Whereuppon I *beseche your L.* againe as in my last, That Some Speedy order *maye* be taken for good correspondence, referringe The rela- tyon of these occurrences to hir highenes and to my LL the of the counsell, *to your wisdom, and good pleasure: wherewith I Take my humble leave.* (0810; Bodley to Burghley)

[19] And for that convenientlie *wee could not heare from youe* what hathe been done in that matter... *I have nevertheless thought good at this time without expecting farther from youe, to let youe knowe,* that of late the Counte Maurice hath written... *I wishe you weare hable to attaine to the knowledge of such matters as youe thinke theie shall both desyre and refuse, and theareof to certifie us with your opinion upon the same...* And *youe shall doe well to move them* to name som others of like quallety on their part: And in the meane time I *prairie* youe advertise my L Browgh heareof, and Consider betwixt youe two, whither wheare the meating for that purpose shall be, at the Haghe, the Brill or elsewhaere: And *for your Instructions theare shall be asmuche done heare as wee cann to gather together the matters for our demaundes,* and as many reasons as wee *cann* to awnswaere theirs... (0809; Burghley to Bodley)

#### 4. Conclusion

Examples of the types given above could be multiplied and, as can be seen, the range of linguistic means employed to enact relationships and strategies is quite vast. This is not unexpected in the text-type analysed, where the education level and the social level of the correspondents and the general tone and communicative intention of the correspondence point to stylistically elaborate language use and high level of awareness of social conventions, including politeness cultural requirements. The methodology used, a rather eclectic mixture of insight from sociopragmatics, historical network analysis and historical stylistics, seems the most promising approach for studies on this type of sample.

The integrated study of several different markers can help us glean a more precise idea of these discourse conventions, and of the extent to which they are text-specific, but also of the stance peculiar to each letter writer. As mentioned, the sheer density of these elements in numerous parts of each letter (as exemplified in [17-19], for instance) shows that pragmatically modulated expressions form the very fabric of diplomatic letters, and act synergistically to set the tone of the exchange. At the same time, the association of elements with different pragmatic strength can be analysed profitably to investigate face-work and the dynamic development of the relationship between correspondents – see e.g. the co-occurrence of *must nedes* and *beseche* in [18], and that of *wish, be able* and *shall in* [19].

It is hoped that an extension of the analysis to a wider portion of the database, with special attention to letters that are direct replies to previous ones, can bring further insight into the sociopragmatics of this unique collection of texts and of Early Modern English official correspondence.

<sup>1</sup>The project is hosted by the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, in cooperation with the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The database includes nearly 1,400 letters, retrieved from different archives. A link to the relevant website is given in the reference list under Primary Source. Thanks are due to Svenja Grabner for help with subsample selection and systematisation.

<sup>2</sup>Among the earlier corpora are the *Innsbruck Letter Corpus*, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC)* and relative *Sampler (CEECS)*, the *Paston Letters*, the *Corpus of Scottish Correspondence 1500-1715 (CSC)*. For a more complete list of resources see Palander-Collin (2010, 667).

<sup>3</sup>Proper names are given in the spelling form that is used in the letters themselves. Burghley is often spelt 'Burleigh'.

<sup>4</sup>There is no space here to review the abundant literature on the sociopragmatic value of pronouns and terms of address; for Early Modern English in particular see Mazzon (2003), and for correspondence Fanego (1996).

<sup>5</sup>References to letters are to their ID number in the online corpus, in progressive sequence according to this number, regardless of dates or other variables, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>6</sup>The sociopragmatic values that this term of address acquired during late Middle English and Early Modern English are investigated in Williams (1992) and Mazzon (2000; 2010).

<sup>7</sup>Evidentiality can be considered a special form of epistemicity, which, as Chafe (1986, 271) defined it, refers to 'any linguistic expression of attitudes towards knowledge', thus including items belonging to several formal categories (not just verbs of reporting); its separation from other forms of epistemicity is however debatable (see e.g. Ziegeler 2003, 45-46 for a short review of the discussion).

<sup>8</sup>On inclusive/exclusive pronouns in Early Modern English (albeit on different text-types than letters) see Marttila (2011, 142 ff.).

<sup>9</sup>Unless otherwise specified, italics in the examples are mine throughout.

<sup>10</sup>In these and the following examples, brackets indicate elements that are variably present.

<sup>11</sup>These cases are listed separately because they are (semi-)parentheticals. The comment clause (Brinton 2008), a parenthetical structure often indicating stance, and hence often developing into a discourse marker (e.g. *you know, you see, I mean, I think*), appears to have developed in some cases from main clauses (*I think that Ann is tall* → *Ann is tall, I think*) and

in other cases from dependent clauses (*Ann is tall, as I think* → *Ann is tall, I think*); the time of the production of the Bodley correspondence is a time that was crucial for the transition towards parenthetical status of some of these structures (see also Mazzon 2012 for a study on the partly similar case *I'm afraid*).

<sup>12</sup>The verb *bruit* is clearly of French origin (cf. the earlier noun *bruit/brut* 'noise' hence 'rumour') and appears in English in the sixteenth century with the meaning 'report'. *Abroad* has in this context the original meaning of 'at large, widely'.

<sup>13</sup>On the importance of these elements in letter writing to convey stance see e.g. Palander-Collin (2012, 418).

<sup>14</sup>This is the most frequent form in this type of predicates, also with variation in emphasis: *I doe thinke* (0821), *I doe rather thynke* (0821), *I do not think* (0807, 1353).

<sup>15</sup>It cannot be argued univocally that *do*-support in affirmative clauses, which is variably present in the sample, has an overtone of emphasis already at this stage. See e.g. Rissanen (1991) on the rise of *do* as prestige variant, and Warner (2012) for a review of studies on Early Modern English in particular.

<sup>16</sup>Other predicates referring directly to the reporting of knowledge such as *say*, *allege*, *assure* (in the construction 'assure somebody of something'), and the highly frequent *signify*, are currently being investigated and will be analysed in a separate article.

<sup>17</sup>On this development, see for instance Gotti (2002).

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# The Construction of Epistolary Identity in a Gentry's Communication Network of the Seventeenth Century: The Case of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon

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## *Abstract*

There has recently been increasing scholarly interest in early modern correspondence and specifically also in women's letter writing and reading. Starting from the late Middle Ages familiar responsibilities and domestic obligations led many women to write to their absent husbands or other relatives to exchange health news and inform them about family affairs. It is however in the early modern period that corresponding with relatives and friends became a widespread social practice ranging from official to familiar and personal correspondence; in this period female literacy increased thus allowing growing numbers of women to write and read their own letters. A growing number of female voices can thus be heard depicting early modern social life. The article focuses on a neglected aspect of women's correspondence: it investigates not the sender's epistolary identity, but that of the recipient through the analysis of the personal correspondence of Lady Cornwallis Bacon. The main theme of the article is to show how the epistolary identity of an early modern gentlewoman was constructed by her correspondents. It is assumed that modes of communicating information and achieving a specific goal through letters varied not only according to the relationship connecting the correspondents but also the purpose and content of letters.

*Keywords:* Discursive Identity, Jane Cornwallis Bacon, Women's Epistolarity

## 1. *Introduction*

Letters were a central part of everyday life in early modern Europe. They were not just a key medium of business and government but also a central form of communication in a world of growing contacts in which they fulfilled multiple functions. In this period, the letter as genre straddles the private/public divide as familiar letters were also passed around groups. Yet the dialogic relationship between sender and recipient is essential to epistolary discourse since, in the seventeenth century as today, a letter is written by one individual and addressed to another. Together they construct an epistolary world in which their physical and psychological separation is overcome by linguistic proximity expressed by the use of 'I/You' pronouns and the fiction of the effective presence of

the audience. In short, early modern familiar epistolary discourse is not just a form of self-presentation as in humanist letters meant for publication (on this point see Van Houdt *et al.*, 2002), but primarily an exchange in which epistolary space is defined by the shared world of the sender and addressee underlying their dialogic relationship. In no other genre do readers figure so prominently within the world of the narrative and in the generation of the text. The epistolary form is unique in making the reader almost as important an agent in the narrative as the writer (on this point see Altman 1982, chapter three: 'The weight of the reader'). Letters allowed both correspondents a space in which to negotiate identities based on the attribution of reciprocal discursive roles. In this context, the construction of the epistolary persona of the recipient is as important as the process of identity-making of the sender.

There has recently been a growing and substantial scholarly interest in both the epistolary genre since the late Middle Ages and women's use of correspondence.<sup>1</sup> Late medieval and early modern women wrote practical, concrete letters to family, friends, members of their larger communities, and strangers, thus making their many voices heard within epistolary networks (Couchman and Crabb, eds, 2005, 3). The present article also deals with the use of letters by early modern women, but it has a slightly different focus as it examines a neglected aspect of female correspondence: it investigates the construction of the discursive identity of a gentlewoman as perceived by her correspondents, both male and female. The collection comprising the personal correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon is mostly composed of letters addressed to this gentlewoman by family members and friends. This correspondence, which is a typical collection of familiar letters, is useful for illustrating how epistolary communication worked in an early modern gentry network. Yet to fully understand the meaning of the letter exchange to seventeenth-century men and women it is perhaps helpful first to delineate the context of letter writing and reading in early modern England.

## *2. Letter Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*

Nowadays writing or reading a letter typically points to a private activity in addition to evoking an absence: it is written by an individual in the absence of the addressee and the content is commonly known only by the correspondents. This was not the situation in medieval and early modern society. In surviving late medieval familiar/mercantile letters such as, for instance, the Cely Papers, the conveyance of news was one of the main functions. Mercantile and gentry correspondents exchanged information about family affairs but also kept a network of people informed about financial and political events (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2010). In early modern England, letters are still instruments for disseminating news, though a crucial change occurred in the late fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Letters became the key medium of communication in a

world of extended contacts – contacts thinned out by distance through business, travel and other forms of separation (Brant 2006, 1). While mercantile correspondence continued the medieval tradition of mixing personal and public elements well into the modern period (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012), gentry correspondence acquired different functions over time. In the early modern period, personal letters in gentry's networks began to be used for a variety of purposes related to the establishment and maintenance of social ties. This change was due to various socio-historical factors affecting the culture of epistolarity. One of the main ones is the fact that, in comparison with the late Middle Ages, a growing number of people wrote their own letters: letters were increasingly autographs. Despite this, all letters still had both a public and private component: they were typically composed in private or by means of a trustworthy secretary or servant, but their transmission was always mediated by a third party of some sort (Schneider 2005, 71). Many seventeenth-century paintings representing the activity of writing or reading a letter show more than one person involved and, in the representations of letter writing, a witness is often present, presumably the messenger waiting for the written communication he has to dispatch. Moreover the bearer of the letter was an important participant in the epistolary network as he could be entrusted by the sender with an oral message thus further blurring the boundaries between private and public communication (Schneider 2005).

Another important factor of change is the social meaning of correspondence in early modern Europe. As Fitzmaurice writes (2002, 4) 'The letter – its writing, reading, keeping, endorsing and sending – apparently permeated every aspect of English life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'. Its centrality to seventeenth-century culture is also demonstrated by the fact that both writing and reading letters was a favourite theme in contemporary Dutch painting representing everyday bourgeois life (Todorov 1997). The letter became the kind of document most commonly written by literate adults because it was used for multiple purposes both in the public and the private spheres. Official and diplomatic letters were the principal means of transmitting political news (Brownlees 2012), but also personal<sup>2</sup> letters could have the function of keeping family members and friends informed of events, both domestic and international. A novel element in early modern English correspondence is that familiar letters, though primarily concerned with the management of family business, were also used for social purposes as in other European countries. In this period epistolary discourse seems increasingly to serve the function of creating an epistolary world where correspondents express proximity by exchanging information relevant to the shared epistolary space and construct an empathetic relationship to strengthen their family or social bond.<sup>3</sup>

Early modern personal letters are first person texts that, in addition to showing a process of sender identity-making, may be very you-oriented in that they allow writers to construct their addressees as epistolary personae in rela-

tion to the function of the main message contained in letters. Senders may use their linguistic resources to position themselves in relation to their interlocutors in the texts thus constructing an epistolary relationship where the identity of both correspondents may depend not only on their social roles, but also on the specific communicative situation. There is in fact an important difference from modern personal letters expressing sentiments of friendliness and closeness. In the seventeenth century, despite the growing social importance of epistolary exchange, the main point of writing a personal letter to a family member or friend remained that of advancing a specific practical purpose, of influencing its reader and persuading her/him to adopt some course of action.

In order to establish how Lady Jane's correspondents perceived her, it is helpful to understand the role played by women in epistolary discourse as both senders and recipients of written messages. The culture of epistolarity in early modern England was one in which the circulation and communication of information took place in communities based on political and domestic business, mutual interest, and intimate circumstances (Schneider 2005, 27). In this context, it is gentlewomen rather than their husbands that cultivated a network of patronage contacts between kin, courtiers and local gentry. In addition, rising female literacy had an influence not only on the practice of letter writing but also on familiar epistolary style in that it promoted greater confidentiality and led to more intimate and private communications (Daybell 2001, 7). So letters written by or addressed to women could work to foster social and even political links in addition to managing family relations. Moreover, not only noblewomen could play an active role in family and political life (Couchman and Crabb, eds, 2005), but also masterful women from the mercantile and gentry elites could wield some sort of authoritativeness in communities wider than the familiar ones. This is certainly the case of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon whose familial responsibilities and obligations imposed by marriage and motherhood authorised her to operate beyond the confines of her household.

### *3. Data and Method*

This article analyses the letters received by Lady Cornwallis Bacon from 1613 to 1644 (only four letters in the collection are written by Lady Cornwallis Bacon). They form a portion of a large mass of manuscript papers that had been found among the family archives and were edited anonymously in 1842 by Richard Griffin Neville, third Baron Baybrooke, who had married Jane Cornwallis, second and last Marquess Cornwallis. The total collection of Cornwallis Bacon papers numbers over six hundred items, including letters, sermon notes, and poems. Lord Baybrooke published only two hundred, so there are many still unpublished, though the recent edition by Moody augmented the original through the addition of a further forty-eight letters (Moody 2003, 12). The present analysis was conducted on the letters edited by Moody, which can be considered a representa-

tive corpus as the editor in her choice of letters to be included 'wanted to ensure a suitable balance of family and friends' (Moody 2003, 12).<sup>4</sup>

Lady Jane was born about 1581, daughter of Hercules Meautys, of West Ham, Essex, descendant from an ancient French family that had come from Normandy with Henry VII. She grew up in the court circle becoming lady-in-waiting to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, and subsequently woman-of-the-bedchamber to Ann of Denmark in 1603. Five years later she became second wife to Sir William Cornwallis, of Brome, Suffolk, who died in 1611, leaving her a young but rich widow with a child just one year old. The control of the family estate was hers, as was the wardship of her infant son. Being young and richly endowed, Lady Jane found herself the object of attention for would-be suitors. By early 1613 negotiations had begun for a union with Nathaniel Bacon, youngest son of a prosperous and well connected family (Moody 2003, 17).

The letters she received chart family relations and friendships, setting these within a pattern of interweaving private and public affairs. As can be seen in the table below, the edited collection includes letters by her husband, several in-laws (mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sisters-in-law, daughter-in-law), her mother, a brother, a cousin, two of her sons, five women friends, two male friends, her household chaplain, a letter by Charles I and two letters by Queen Henrietta Maria. In brief, they offer a wide spectrum of familiar and social ties which well represents an early modern gentry epistolary network.

*Nuclear family and kin members*

Second husband	32
Sons	19 + 6
Mother	2
Brother	18
Cousin	30
Mother-in-law	6
Mother in law of Lady Jane's son	1
Brother-in-law	5
Sisters-in-law	33+5
Daughter-in-law	17

*Friends and acquaintances*

5 Women friends	52
2 Male friends	6
Household chaplain and private chaplain	3
King and Queen	3
2 acquaintances	5

In investigating the construction of Lady Jane's epistolary identity, special attention will be given to terms and phrases of address and closure as they identify and give respect to the social role and status of the sender and receiver, placing

both within institutionalised social relations (Palander-Collin 2010, 657). Address terms and phrases are helpful as a key to interpreting social and affective relations in dialogues between characters in plays (Mazzon 2009); in more general terms they are efficacious indicators in historical studies (Taavitsainen and Jucker, eds, 2003), including of course those of letters (Nevala 2003, 2004).

According to Nevala (2004), who makes use of the concepts of distance and power by Brown and Levinson (1987), given the hierarchical structure of early modern England, the factors that most influence the choice of both forms of direct address and terms of reference reflecting politeness strategies are social distance and relative power relations.<sup>5</sup> This is certainly true. However, it is here assumed that a third factor may also influence the composition of letters: the specific purpose the writer has in mind and his/her related persuasive aim as the subject matter of most letters is closely linked to some practical purpose. In addition, the content of the letter may be an indicator of gender differences. The topics dealt with in the correspondence cover a wide spectrum: they range from personal and domestic matters, such as Lady Jane's health and confinements, the marriage of her eldest son, the debts incurred by her brother, or a lawsuit to protect her inheritance, to covering events in London and the effects of uncertainty abroad (Moody 2003, 16). Yet topics such as marriage negotiations and domestic events seem to be preferred by female correspondents, while the circulation of political news is more to the fore in male letters.

The analysis of letters allows one to focus on identity as performed rather than as prior to language, as dynamic rather than fixed, as culturally and historically located, as constructed in interaction with other people, as continuously remade, and as contradictory and situational. The practice of letter writing as a form of narration involves the 'doing' of identity and the construction of different identity versions (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 138). However, the analysis of one-sided correspondence raises a significant issue. The letters addressed to Lady Jane survive without their companions and so present a singular perspective: because of this they are not particularly suitable to explore the dialogic and interactional aspects of a genre which has often been defined as near to conversation. Yet they are rich in stance markers that allow the exploration of the senders' construction of their image of the addressee and illustrate the multiplicity of relationships among correspondents. In particular the formality *vs* colloquiality aspect seems to be a function of the role assumed by the sender of the letter, which can vary not only according to the relative social status and relationship bonding her/him to Lady Jane, but also, as already indicated, according to the purpose of the letter.

#### 4. *The Correspondents and the Correspondence*

The first seventeen letters relate to the matrimonial negotiations for Lady Jane's union with Nathaniel Bacon. This group of letters includes those written by

Lady Jane, Anne Lady Bacon, her future mother-in-law, and the mediator between the two sides, the Rector Mr Parr.

These letters are rather businesslike and show that Lady Jane was quite competent in managing her own financial interests. A letter by Lady Bacon to Mr Parr in replying to the request of settling as much as they could afford on their youngest son, the suitor of Lady Jane, makes use of a commercial analogy, likening Lady Jane to an expensive acquisition:

[1] And although the jewel laid before us be never so rich, if we be not able to buy it we must be content to forbear it. We must not lay out all our stock upon one purchase, having so many others to provide for. (Letter 11, 1613, in Moody 2003, 69-70)

As can be expected, these letters are rather formal as they focus on the business of making the match in the context of seventeenth-century modes of settling the union in a gentry community. The letters by Mr Parr and Lady Bacon show that Lady Jane is perceived by both her would-be mother-in-law and the mediator in very practical terms. Only the letters by the future husband, Nathaniel Bacon, are more intimate as their primary aim is to conduct a courtship. He addresses her as 'Sweet Madam' and later, when his proposal had been accepted as 'Sweet Heart', while the endorsement is obviously more formal: 'To his best respected/ To his noble friend the Lady Bacon, at Brome, give these'. His letters contain numerous expressions that indicate his warm affection for his wife and how he enjoyed receiving her letters when she was away. See for instance, a letter written to his wife while she was staying in London:

[2] Sweet Heart, In some haste and few words I do return you many thanks for your letter received by Mr Bailiff, together with the news, but especially for the abundance of your love therein professed; which I desire you to believe is so welcome unto me that the meditation thereof must be unto me my chiefest comfort in this your absence, and that my best endeavours shall always aim at some means to my poor power both to requite and deserve it. Our children with myself are in health (God be thanked), with the rest of your friends. I wish you good success with your business, and in the meantime content both with the place and the proceedings. Excuse my shortness, being commanded by the day and time; and entertain the best prayers of him who is always Yours, Nathaniel Bacon (Letter 66, 1624, in Moody 2003, 115-116)

Nathaniel's letters, when written from home, give Lady Jane information about the health of family members and friends and depict the situation at home, while, when he is absent from home, they also report news both domestic and international. Nathaniel's letters from home generally report domestic events and have a reference to the children's well-being and state of health, as if he needed to reassure his wife that although she was away from home they were developing satisfactorily under his supervision. The closing section is normally devoted to the expression of closeness and intimacy as, for instance, in the following letter:

[3] For the business, although the success has not yet satisfied my desires, yet it has so far equalled my expectation that I cannot but be fully persuaded of your most great care and diligence, whereby it has attained this present estate. [...] Little news I can write; only the marriage of my niece Gawdy, and the death of Pearse and Frank Wodehouse.

Myself and the children are in perfect health, God be thanked; the which I shall daily wish and pray to you and Fred, *with my best endeavours to be so much myself, that I may fully persuade you that my great happiness shall always consist in being*

Your Nathaniel Bacon (Letter 65, 1624, in Moody 2003, 115)<sup>6</sup>

On the whole, Nathaniel's letters always bear witness to the warmth of their relationship as husband and wife. His letters seem to have the predominant function of closing the gap, represented by geographical distance, by keeping in touch with a beloved wife. This is reflected in the use of address terms and the language of intimacy mostly used in the closures of the letters. We can say that the language employed in writing these letters reflects the growing informality in family relations in the early modern period observed by Stone (1977) and Burke (2000). While in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relations between spouses in rich families were often fairly remote, in a considerable number of cases, some degree of affection, or at least a good working partnership developed after the marriage. This seems to be the case of Nathaniel and Jane Bacon whose marriage was obviously a happy one as far as we can see from the letters the husband wrote when he or she were absent from home. In these letters Lady Jane emerges as a loved and respected wife and their epistolary relation as based less on authority and more on affection and practical cooperation.

The letters by the two sons contained in the collection tend to have a practical purpose, in addition to exchanging information, and show that formality and distance were still regulating mother/sons relations. The letters by Lady Jane's eldest son Sir Frederick Cornwallis, the only child of Lady Jane and her first husband, begin once he had moved into the court circle. While his mother was busy looking for a suitable match for him (the collection includes letters by her friends at court involved in the matter), he secretly married without his mother's knowledge or consent. In the first letter in the collection he addresses her as 'Madam' and concludes with the very respectful phrase 'So humbly asking your blessing, I am, with the truth of my heart, Your Ladyship's not less dutiful than obliged humble son'. In the following letters he asks for the forgiveness of his indignant mother and addresses her as 'My Dear Mother'. The letters are likewise concluded by very respectful phrases such as 'And now, dear mother, hoping and praying for that happy hour, I rest, and ever shall, Your most obedient son' or 'Your most obedient son till death'. In later letters, after the reconciliation sponsored by the King and Queen, the tone is slightly less formal though it tends to remain apologetic and there is also space for communicating news. Letters written from the Hague contain information about his and his wife's stay in the Hague and finish with phrases such as 'Your most (affectionately)

obedient son'; they may even contain reference to humiliating<sup>7</sup> gestures as in the letter written before leaving:

[4] My warning is so short that I cannot have time *to come kiss your hands myself*, for I knew not of it until within this hour, and we must go away upon Wednesday. Thus with the presentments of mine and my wife's humble duty and respects to your Ladyship, who desires to be excused for not writing, I rest... (Letter 180, 1631, in Moody 2003, 220-221)

On the whole, the numerous letters by Lady Jane's eldest son use the humiliating discourse of patronage seeking as he was dependent upon financial help from his mother, though they occasionally show his affectionate feelings towards her. Their relationship was thus unequal, the maternal role being characterised by authority and financial power, and Lady Jane's identity as constructed in her son's letters shows traces of the distance still regulating the interpersonal parent/child relation in early modern England.

The letters by Frederick's wife Elizabeth show that her relationship to her mother-in-law became increasingly less formal: her addresses to Lady Jane shift from 'Madam' to 'Dear Madam' to 'Dear Mother', while the closure remains rather respectful 'Your Ladyship's humble and affectionate daughter / Your Ladyship's most affectionate daughter to command'. She often uses a pleading tone as in the following letter: 'Madam, I humbly thank you for your good news of my husband and his bairns, and for your love and favour to us all, which I beseech God to reward you for us all with his saving grace' (Letter 216, 1635/36, Moody 2003, 246-247).

She usually writes with a specific purpose, asking for help about financial problems or asking for news of her children left with Lady Jane in the rural tranquillity of the family estate while the young couple were involved in court life.<sup>8</sup> Expressions such as 'poor sweet babs' (Letter 202, 1634, Moody 2003, 257-259) to whom she sends her love or 'I should be very glad to see prattling Fred' (Letter 228, 1639, Moody 2003, 257-259) show that the young woman was unhappily separated from her family and came increasingly to rely on Lady Jane. These letters mostly contain information about the health of family members and reference to the state of some family business (mostly money troubles):

[5] Madam, here is your order which I wish may be useful to you, for were it in my power to make it so I am sure it should. Tonight, going up the back stairs I met Mr Lucas coming down, so I took him aside and delivered him your Ladyship's message for the half, which I told him I was to have sent to him the next day had I not so luckily met him. But truly I found that he was not satisfied, for he grumbles a little and said that he thought my lady would not be pleased with that, for my Lord had already done his part all but sealing. I told him again that you said you knew he would not mistrust your payment, and he said no, and I said if he did he had the patent in his hands. (Letter 217, 1636, in Moody 2003, 247-248)

She sometimes reports gossip from the court. In doing this Elizabeth Cornwallis uses the informal tone which seems increasingly to characterise her epistolary relationship with her mother-in-law. Her writing and spelling are unstable (Moody 2003, 27); however, her use of colloquial words (for instance in letter 216, 1636) to ask her mother-in-law to act as a substitute mother to her children indicates the trust and confidence the young woman had in her mother-in-law.

[6] Pray Madam, be pleased to bless and bus the babs for me.<sup>9</sup> Sir Thomas Stafford presents his service: he is piteously in love, and sometimes he's in hope and sometimes in despair, and what will be his end I know not. (Letter 216, 1636, in Moody 2003, 246-247)

Though Elizabeth's letters are primarily concerned with her isolated situation at court and her troubles over money mostly due to her free-spending husband, they also show that she was linked by an increasingly warm relationship to her mother-in-law, whose identity she constructs as that of a trusted and affectionate motherly figure.

Other letters written by women include requests for help by relatives (such as for instance Mary Cornwallis, Countess of Bath, her sister-in-law), or letters from close friends, particularly Lucy, Countess of Bedford, who seems to consider Lady Jane as her main confidante. Lucy, Countess of Bedford, was the favourite lady-in-waiting to Queen Ann and the dominant figure in the circle of female courtiers. In spite of the formality of the address – 'Dear Cornwallis' or 'Dear Madam' – there is in her letters an intimacy and a willingness to share particular anxieties which indicate a relationship based on equal status and reciprocity. See, for instance, the closure to letter 72 (1624) 'For all your kindnesses I can but love you, which I do and ever shall heartily while there is breath in "Your most affectionate and faithful friend"', or a letter in which she offers comfort to her friend:

[7] It is one of my misfortunes, and such a one that I assure you I am very sensible of, to be thus far from you in a time wherein I perceive your love would have made me that to you which I as affectionately desire to be as to have myself the comfort of a friend by me, when any oppression lies heavy on my heart, to whom I might trust my cares, and be sure they should not only be safely lodged, but beget a desire to ease them as far as were possible, or at least advise how to make them lightest... But, for all that, you must not loose courage nor let your kind sensibleness, which is the self-wordingest thing, make you so unkind to yourself and yours as to yield up the strength of your resisting reason, and consent to sink under that melancholy... (Letter 43, 1619, in Moody 2003, 94-96)

The letters by another close friend and cousin Dorothy Lady Randolph are slightly more formal as she addresses Lady Jane as 'My Most Honoured

Lady' and concludes with expressions such as 'Your most (loving,) faithful, and humble servant'. They mostly report the state of marriage negotiations and other family affairs and contain the usual information as to the health of family and friends. The collection contains a few letters by other women friends and a substantial number of letters from Lady Jane's sister-in-law, Anna Lady Meautys. She addresses Lady Jane as '(Most) Dear sister' and closes her letters with expressions such as 'Your most affectionate and truly sister ever to serve you/to be commanded', or 'Your most assured in all true affection' which indicate how she hedged the formal formulae by introducing words that show a more intimate relationship. Her letters usually only report the state of family affairs and not infrequently ask for financial help. In so doing she uses humiliating discourse strategies; for instance she concludes a letter where she asks Lady Jane to intercede on her behalf by writing [8] or another [9] where she reports the request by her husband, Lady Jane's brother:

[8] And so, beseeching you to be an assistance to me in this business, I shall, now and ever, continue Your most affectionate and truly loving sister to be commanded... (Letter 192, 1632, in Moody 2003, 227-228)

[9] Mr Meautys saying often unto me 'Sweet heart, if my sister Bacon fails me I do not know what will become of me and mine', with the tears staring in his eyes. Oh sister! He has had many crosses of late by unjust dealing taking away that which is due unto him. This is his reward for his long service and great pains taken for these unworthy people. (Letter 210, 1635, in Moody 2003, 241-242)

She often pleads her case in humiliating terms or expresses appreciation for help received in similar terms:

[10] I have formerly written unto you of the receipt both of your letters and monies which you was pleased to send us, the sum a hundred pounds that which I will acknowledge myself as ever your most engaged. ... Thus with the recommendation of my unfained affections both to you and all yours, and my blessing to my Hercules, I kiss your hands and rest

Your most truly and ever loving sister to be commanded. (Letter 222, 1636, in Moody 2003, 252-253)

The letters from Lady Jane's daughter-in-law and sister-in-law, the most numerous written by in-laws in the collection, usually beg for favours and both report and ask for health information, particularly of children left with Lady Jane. It seems that it was women that were left to cope with moneylenders and ask for financial help, which they generously received from Lady Jane, who was consequently perceived as a benefactress by the two women. The identity constructed in such letters varies from that of the affectionate family member to that of the generous patron when asking for financial help. In

letters from male correspondents we mostly read of public news in addition to family business and health. For instance in letters from her cousin, Thomas Meautys,<sup>10</sup> who addresses her quite formally as 'My Most excellent Good/ Ever Best Lady and Cousin', Lady Jane receives detailed news from London about domestic political affairs and events abroad.

In letters from Lady Jane's brother, Sir Thomas Meautys, a career soldier stationed mainly in the Low Countries in the pay of the Prince of Orange, Lady Jane receives news about public events abroad. But the content of his letters, like those of his wife's, is mostly related to family affairs as he often writes to ask for financial help or inquire about the health of his child left with Lady Jane; however the informal tone of his letters shows that he was an affectionate brother. This, for instance, is seen in the letter of condolences written after the death of Lady Jane's husband or in sections of letters keeping her informed about family health:

[11] I am very sorry to understand by your servant that you are not in good health, and the more because I hear that it is an ague that travails you at present. . . . My poor wife I am sure is much distressed for that she has not heard from me never since my coming from her, neither do I know how to send unto her, poor creature! to comfort her. I pray remember my love to my brother Bacon and to all your little ones; and, I pray, entertain the true love of Your ever affectionate brother and servant. (Letter 89, 1625, in Moody 2003, 136-137)

Letters from male friends are less numerous in the collection and, on the whole, show that Lady Jane was addressed with deference. Her brother-in-law, Sir Edmund Bacon, addresses her as 'sister' and closes his letters formally with phrases such as 'Your (very) loving brother, ready to do you service'. The collection includes a few letters from him dealing with family affairs. It also includes a few letters by a friend, Sir Ambrose Randolph, who held important public positions (ambassador, master and comptroller of the posts to the Queen and chamberlain of the Exchequer) and was then able to communicate news to Lady Jane. He formally addresses her as 'Most Honoured Lady' and concludes with phrases such as 'Your Ladyship's most affectionate kinsman to serve you and yours'. The letters by Sir Ambrose's wife, Dorothy, are equally formal as she addresses Lady Jane as 'My most honoured Lady' and concludes with phrases such as 'Your Ladyship's most faithful friend and humble servant'. However, they are more colloquial as, in addition to the usual health information, they report with much detail marriage negotiations in businesslike terms and other wifely topics such as, for instance, the search for a good cook.

[12] I am now, thank God, so well rid of my pain that I am able to give you an account at large of all the business you write about. . . . I went since to visit Mrs Dickson, and the discourse fell upon the old business; but she made answer there was no good to be done for the two elder daughters. . . . I spoke with Mr Chitting about Sir Thomas

Barrington's niece; he seems to think she is worth seven thousand pounds, but he will write to you the particulars. (Letter 142, 1629, in Moody 2003, 191-192)

On the whole, letters by male relatives and friends tend to be more formal and to construct Lady Jane's epistolary identity as that of an authoritative member of their social network, unless they are written with the aim of asking for financial help, in which case they tend to use the humiliating discourse of patronage seeking that expresses distance and unequal social status.

The collection also includes one letter by King Charles I (Letter 163, 1631, Moody 2003, 208) and two letters by Queen Henrietta Maria (Letters 164, 165, 1631, Moody 2003, 208-209). They wrote to effect a reconciliation between Lady Jane and her son Frederick Cornwallis. Frederick's service to King Charles encouraged the monarch to support his choice of a maid of honour to the queen. The letters indicate not only that the royal couple showed a lively interest in the union, but also that Lady Jane was held in high regard at court. The salutation shows formality and respect 'To Our Trusty and [Right] Well Beloved Lady Bacon' and the tone of the letter is appeasing as the sender shows consideration for Lady Jane's position. For instance, in her first letter, the queen tries to persuade the indignant mother by

[13] assuring yourself that the gracious intentions which we carry towards our servant and his wife shall extend themselves in so large a measure, both towards him and towards you (if you will make use of them), as at last your own good nature will acknowledge that your son could not have taken a better course, either for his own advancement or for your satisfaction, than that wherein he is for the present. (Letter 164, 1631, in Moody 2003, 208-209)

In the second letter, following the reconciliation, the queen indicates her pleasure at Lady Jane's finally receiving 'again your son into your favour' (letter 165, 1631) and thanks her for 'the respect that you have showed to our request' (letter 165, 1631). Royal letters construct Lady Jane's identity as that of a greatly respected member of the court circle.

### 5. *Conclusion*

In the early modern period personal letters are multifunctional documents. The activity of letter writing was necessary for the efficient conduct of routine business, including the management of family business, but not all letters have just a practical purpose and some also express love and friendship. Most letters addressed to Lady Jane are written in the cause of seeking her domestic patronage: they contain appeals asking for help of various kinds and acknowledge that help when received by expressing thanks. But they also express sentiments of proximity and companionship. So the analysis of this collection allows us to explore how the addressee's epistolary identity is constructed through the

range of ways in which relatives and acquaintances approach her through both the humiliating discourse of patronage seeking and that of intimacy and affection within the epistolary world bonding the two correspondents to one another. Letter writers have multiple roles depending on both their social relationship and situation. They accordingly construct the receiver's identity as a function of their social relationship and the message of the letter. The use of linguistic resources, particularly in the openings and closures of the letters, shows the varying degrees of formality and intimacy enjoyed by Lady Jane throughout her life among her friends and family and illustrate how her epistolary identity, though multifaceted, is on the whole that of a respected and authoritative woman. As Moody writes 'it is certain that she was recognized as a formidable woman as well as kind and generous, and, if anything, sometimes to be feared' (2003, 39). Lady Jane emerges as the authoritative figure in the family network, the giver of favours to correspondents inferior in status and resources, but also as an affectionate and generous mother and grandmother.

The analysis also reveals some gender differences. Letters written by both men and women contain information about health as it was common practice for seventeenth-century correspondents to discourse continually about health matters, their own as well as those of their friends and family. The function of health communication and advice between intimates, however, has less to do with the transmission and exchange of information, and more to do with demonstrating empathy and understanding. As for the transmission of real information, however, there is a difference: letters written by women tend to focus on family events and gossip, while those written by men contain also political news, both domestic and foreign. As to the construction of the epistolary identity of Lady Jane there are no evident gender differences. To sum up, the analysis shows that her identity is a function of the familiar/social relationship bonding her to her correspondents, but also depends in no small proportion on the practical aim of the message, which also influences the rhetorical choices of letter writers.

<sup>1</sup> On letter writing from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period see Constable 1976, Fitzmaurice 2002, Schneider 2005, Brant 2006, Nevalainen and Tanskanen 2007, Petrucci 2008, Cottone and Chiavetta 2010, Dossena and Del Lungo Camiciotti, eds, 2012; on English vernacular letters see Davis 1967, 1971-1976, Taylor 1980, Sanchez Roura 2001, Richardson 2001. On women's letter writing see Classen 1988, Cherevatuk and Wiethaus 1993, Doglio 1993, Richardson 1997, Zarri 1999, Watt 2004, Daybell 2001, Daybell 2006, Couchman and Crabb 2005.

<sup>2</sup> According to Palander-Collin (2010) the term 'personal' is to be preferred to the dichotomous pair 'private/public' because early modern English letters typically circulated in a correspondence network containing both public and personal and family news, and might be read aloud in social gatherings. Also according to Brant (2006), the categories of 'personal' and 'social' are much more useful than the categories of 'private' and 'public' with reference to

early modern correspondence as they have the advantage of suggesting a subset relationship: personal is to social as particular to general (Brant 2006, 5). On the dichotomous pair public/private in communication see Brownlees, Del Lungo and Denton, eds, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, it is perhaps worth mentioning the correspondence of Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), Duchess of Newcastle upon Tyne, whose *Sociable Letters* (Fitzmaurice 2004) offer a remarkable depiction of seventeenth-century social life.

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of personal letters as historical research data see Nurmi *et al.*, eds, 2009, on their relevance to historical sociolinguistic study see Nevalainen and Tanskanen, eds, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> The allocation of authority from others and gender related patterns of interaction influence and illuminate family interaction still today, though power seems to be inseparable from connection (Tannen 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Italics here and in following letters added by the author of the present article.

<sup>7</sup> Brown and Levinson (1987) call the 'humiliative mode' of politeness the practise of praising the other and depreciating the self and its possession which today is perceived as servile, but which was common in the European regime of civility when hierarchy and an asymmetrical mode of address regulated social relations. On the social norms regulating social hierarchy in early modern England see Bryson 1998, Burke 2000, Postles 2005.

<sup>8</sup> In the early modern period emotional ties between husbands and wives tended to be weakened by the high rate of mortality and remarriage, while the parent/child relationship, in addition to the high mortality rate, was also affected by the upper-class English practice of sending children away from home either to school or to live with a kin member. This fostered a pattern of extreme deference to parents in the home, which was in full conformity with behaviour norms of society at large (Stone 1977, 172).

<sup>9</sup> In this letter Elizabeth asks her mother-in-law to bless and box, that is to punish, her babies for her.

<sup>10</sup> Two correspondents are called Thomas Meautys, both close to Lady Jane. A cousin to Lady Jane, a high-ranking civil servant, and Lady Jane's brother Sir Thomas Meautys, a career soldier fighting the war of the Palatinate with a company of English volunteers.

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# Scientific Interaction Within Henry Oldenburg's Letter Network

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## *Abstract*

The article investigates various functions fulfilled by letters exchanged by European scholars and experimenters in the period 1660-1676. The correspondence network taken into consideration is the one coordinated by Henry Oldenburg, who was responsible for a large exchange of letters in that period, particularly when he became the first Secretary of the Royal Society. The analysis shows that this correspondence greatly stimulated the growth of a real community of adepts, as it provided an excellent means for the exchange of views, the conducting of controversies, the corroboration of individual observations and the official recognition of one's own findings. Communal correspondence also fulfilled other important goals linked to socialization purposes, favouring the creation of a new specialized community sharing innovative intellectual interests and professional practices, as well as the adoption of a spirit of solidarity among its members.

*Keywords:* Communal Correspondence, Controversy, Experimentation, Henry Oldenburg, Royal Society

## 1. *Introduction*

This article examines the exchange of letters that took place between several European scholars and experimenters in the period 1660-1676. The aim of the article is to investigate the various functions fulfilled by these letters and highlight the contribution that this exchange made to the development of science. The correspondence network taken into consideration here is the one coordinated by Henry Oldenburg, who was responsible for a large exchange of letters in that period, particularly when he became the first Secretary of the Royal Society.

In the seventeenth century communal correspondence was widespread and was used for the attainment of several aims. Indeed, the exchange of letters was not always intended for merely personal purposes, but often had a wider scope and a more official function, offering recipients greater opportunities of keeping abreast of the times. Letters often conveyed information about the research work carried out not only by individuals but also by groups, and were frequently addressed not merely to single experimenters but also

to teams of researchers working elsewhere. The development of communal correspondence – favoured by the introduction of postal services, which, particularly in the seventeenth century, became quite regular and reliable – greatly stimulated the growth of a real community of adepts, as it provided an excellent means for the exchange of views, the conducting of controversies, the corroboration of individual observations and the official recognition of one's own findings. Letters were often distributed through clearing houses for scientific correspondence, such as the salon of Father Marin Mersenne in Paris or the office of Henry Oldenburg in London. Samuel Hartlib, too, engaged in a great deal of correspondence; by means of his 'office of address' he maintained very useful relations both at home and abroad. In these clearing houses, letters were copied and sent to several new recipients, who usually read them aloud at their local meetings with colleagues and friends, thus helping the formation of 'hidden' or 'invisible' colleges (Mantel 1980). The development of communal correspondence greatly stimulated the growth of a real community of adepts. Ultee (1987, 100) estimates that in 1690 there were at least 1,200 active corresponding members of the Republic of Letters in northern Europe. Particularly in France and England, scientists commonly published announcements of discoveries, reported on experiments or expressed their views on some subject of controversy in the form of a letter to a friend. These letters were reproduced and distributed to several readers.

In 1662 the Royal Society was founded, after a period in which its members had met in an informal manner (Hartley 1960; Valle 2006). The efficacy of this corresponding activity was greatly enhanced by the Royal Charter which gave the Society 'full power and authority, by letters or epistles [of the Royal Society in matters or things philosophical, mathematical, or mechanical...] to enjoy mutual intelligence and knowledge with all and all manner of strangers and foreigners, whether private or collegiate, corporate or politic, without any molestation, interruption, or disturbance whatsoever' (quoted in Boas Hall 1991, 55). This privilege to correspond freely with citizens of other countries was particularly helpful in a period of great domestic turbulence and international conflicts. Many letters were read aloud at meetings of the Royal Society, particularly before the *Philosophical Transactions* started publication (Johns 2003).

The circulation of these letters did not only imply a direct relationship between the writer and the main addressee, but also with several other recipients, as copies of the original letter were often made by the main addressee and then circulated through the network. As Banks (2012, 87) rightly remarks, 'Such correspondence was not private in the contemporary sense: it was generally understood that these letters were to be copied, sent on, read at meetings, or otherwise disseminated'. A confirmation of this practice comes from the following direct testimony, which points out that these letters were commonly conceived to be public rather than private, as they were not only read out aloud

at meetings and circulated among colleagues, but also frequently printed. The writer was supposed to be aware of this, as is clearly pointed out by Auzout:

I am very sorry that you are displeas'd at my having printed (at the request of my friends) the letter you kindly wrote to me setting forth the opinions of Mr Hooke. I did not regard this letter as being altogether your own work as much as the reply of Mr Hooke and since both of us had already begun by printing this material I saw no inconvenience in printing the rest if our friends wish'd to see the sequel of the dispute. For I see little difference between printing scientific matters contained in letters and showing these same letters to those learn'd in these matters who can copy them out when they have them on loan, and everyone knows perfectly well that when one exchanges ideas by letter one does not look for eloquent and polished but plain and simple language and that there is a great difference between an eloquent discourse and some treatise which has been written on some occasion for oneself alone which one would never print without the author's permission or a letter which one writes well aware of the fact that it will be shown to many learn'd men... (Auzout to Oldenburg, 23 September 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 518, original in French, translated by the editors)

As it was commonly understood that the knowledge shared by the network through these quasi-public letters would be made visible in the public discourse of the community, some – or parts – of them were read at the meetings of the Royal Society or were published in journals such as the *Philosophical Transactions*. Indeed, Oldenburg often read the contents of the letters that he received at the meetings of the Royal Society, thus transforming his private correspondence into public communication. Here is a direct confirmation of this policy:

When your most welcome letter of 4 January last was lately handed to me by your distinguished relative, I judg'd it altogether proper to exhibit it as soon as possible to our Royal Society so honorably mention'd therein by you and to call the Fellows' attention to your singular goodwill towards them. They received your remarks on their purposes with great pleasure and congratulate themselves particularly on recruiting for their cause a man of so great fame, who promises to enhance the honour and further the business of their Society. (Oldenburg to Hevelius, 11 May 1664, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 186, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

This explains why these letters look like hybrid texts, combining both private and public news: the former (such as personal or family news), commonly placed at the beginning or end of the letter so as to be easily omitted in the copying and sharing phase; the latter (usually located in the central part of the letter) containing the public information to be passed on to other members of the network. As Daston (1991, 371) states, 'The scholarly letter of this period was a peculiar hybrid of the personal and the public, composed with both a particular reader and a general readership in mind'. This is the reason

why communal correspondence has often been referred to as an example of 'semi-public' writing (Chartier *et al.* 1997). As pointed out by Constable (1976), there has been a great change as regards the standards that apply to Early Modern letters compared to contemporary private correspondence: the latter are characterized by spontaneity and privacy, while the former – even when they were considered private correspondence – had a more public status as in the Early Modern period letter writers were aware that their letters were often meant to be read by more than one person. This greater publicity determined closer attention to formal features rather than to spontaneity and intimacy, which implied the adoption of an appropriate style to convey the right level of courtesy and civility. Indeed, the opening of these letters was commonly very obsequious, highly praising the addressee and placing the writer in a humble position. They often continued with a sign of solidarity (such as an enquiry about the addressee's health and stating one's good health or the memory of a previous meeting) thus expressing Positive Politeness (in Brown and Levinson's [1987] terms) and only then formulating the request (a Negative Face-Threatening Act). For example, in the following quotation, Lister's request to Oldenburg to help him defend his credibility and fair behaviour is preceded by praises of the interlocutor and memories of their first meeting:

Sr. I presume from your Civilitie (wch I did well understand yt moment I had ye hap-  
pinesse to kisse your hands wth Mr Skippon at your house in London) & prudence,  
yt if such Note be printed... noe unhandsome reflection will be made upon me or  
anything detracting from my credit in suffering my notes to be published. (Lister to  
Oldenburg, 9 August 1670, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, VII, 105)

This sequence would be followed by further forms of solidarity or some act of self-deprecation demonstrating Negative Politeness – e.g. a self-deprecating formula such as *your servant* or *your slave* – meant as an act of redress. For instance, the quotation above is completed by the offer to continue correspondence on a regular basis – mitigated by the use of several modalising elements such as *venture, may, happen, not altogether* – and a final formula expressing humility:

This Letter I venture to send to you by Mr Martin your printer at ye Bell: but if you  
please to send me how I may direct a Letter to you & to entertain a correspondence  
wth me, I happen upon something now & than wch may not be unwelcome to you  
& I am at present not altogether unfurnished of such matters I am

Your humble servant

Martin Lister. (Lister to Oldenburg, 9 August 1670, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, VII, 105)

First and second person pronouns were often used to refer to the writer and the addressee. The tone was polite and the style in line with the 'civil' style used also in the other types of contributions. In this, the letter was facilitated

by the fact that this text type was the one that most resembled conversation in highlighting politeness values (Klein 1994).

The role of people such as Oldenburg and Mersenne was not merely passive but also active, as they did not limit themselves to receiving correspondence but also requested news and views from their correspondents. Moreover, in many cases Oldenburg started corresponding with important foreign scientists – such as Hevelius from Danzig and Malpighi from Bologna – even without being instructed to do so by the Society's Council. The important role played by Oldenburg in stimulating the start of epistolary communication with an innovative experimenter is well highlighted by Boas Hall in the case of Newton:

It must be remembered that without Oldenburg, Newton would never have published his early optical papers, which Oldenburg extracted from him by skilful praise, report of the Royal Society's appreciation (first of his reflecting telescope, then of his first paper on light and colours of 1672) and communication of others' reactions. All this was cleverly done and elicited from Newton valuable clarifications of his ideas. (Boas Hall 1975, 181)

The vastness of Oldenburg's exchange of letters is confirmed by his contemporaries. According to Martin Lister, a biologist who belonged to the Royal Society network:

[Oldenburg] held Correspondence with seventy odd persons in all parts of the World, and those be sure with others; I ask'd him what Method he used to answer so great a variety of subjects, and such a quantity of Letters as he must receive weekly; for I know he never failed, because I had the honour of his Correspondence for Ten or Twelve Years. He told me he made one Letter answer another, and that to be always fresh, he never read a Letter before he had Pen, Ink and Paper ready to answer it forthwith; so that the multitude of his Letters cloy'd him not, or ever lay upon his hands. (Quoted in Oldenburg 1965-1986, I, xvii-xviii)

Oldenburg's role was not limited to providing foreign scientists with news, but also to act as an intermediary between foreign scientists and English ones, informing them of one another's activities and opinions. Sometimes foreigners contacted Oldenburg directly to learn more about the current work of an English scientist and would then receive some news from him. The reverse also occurred with English fellows contacting Oldenburg with enquiries, requiring him to write letters to experts abroad. The vastness of these intermediary activities is confirmed by Oldenburg himself in his account of 'The Business of the Secretary of y<sup>e</sup> R. Soc.'. Referring to himself in the third person, he writes:

He... writes all Letters abroad and answers the returns made to ym entertaining a corresp. wth at least 50. persons; employes a great deal of time, and takes much pains in inquiring after and satisfying forrain demands about philosophicall matters, disperseth farr and near store of directions and inquiries for the society's purpose, and sees them well recommended etc. (Quoted in Boas Hall 1965, 290)

As Secretary of the Royal Society, Oldenburg often read the contents of his 'official' correspondence, particularly about new theories and experiments, at the Society's meetings. These were considered of great interest by the Fellows, who debated them by adding their own considerations and experimental accounts. Oldenburg's role as the centre of this correspondence network was not at all neutral. At times he either mediated between contrasting views or did the reverse, stimulating debate and even arousing conflict, as in the case of the prolonged controversy over comet observation and theory, involving exchanges between both Auzout and Hooke and Auzout and Hevelius (Boas Hall 1991, 58). Moreover, his role in promoting a wide *commerce de lettres* brought him a certain status, as he was the kingpin in the correspondence network. As Goldgar (1995) aptly remarks: 'The wider the *commerce* of a scholar, the greater his status, both because he clearly had the respect of many colleagues, and because his extensive network of contacts allowed him to procure assistance for many 'subordinates' in the community' (1995, 30).

## 2. *Sharing Information*

The main function of these letters was to convey or require information about one's own or other people's work. Letters were circulated in order to make known some new idea or discovery to other members of the learned community or to present some personal observations concerning interesting or unusual events worthy of notice. This sharing of opinions and experience confirms the high degree of cooperativeness existing in the community, which derives from the Baconian principles aiming at the construction of a strong base of empirical knowledge from which generalizations could then be drawn. Every scientist tried to have a correspondent in the major scientific centres of Europe so as to be able to exchange news and opinions with them. They often initiated the correspondence as they were eager to learn more and possibly share in the work of the foreign group or because they were interested in a particular subject or needed some specific information. Although keeping a large correspondence was time-consuming, they preferred to do so as it was often the best way to know what was happening elsewhere in the world. Books recorded only completed results and therefore took years to appear; moreover, it was often difficult to find out what books had been published on a specific topic. The use of correspondence offered several advantages to researchers:

Unlike weekly meetings of the Society, correspondence allowed geographically remote individuals to engage in, and with, the new sciences. While publication and distribution of the *Philosophical Transactions* certainly contributed to the diffusion of knowledge, it did not provide for the flexibility, openness, manoeuvrability and relative rapidity of interaction that correspondence did. In short, the Society's correspondence encouraged a more participatory science. (Rusnock 1999, 156)

The main topic dealt with was 'natural philosophy', or science and technology in our terms (the word *science* had not yet acquired its contemporary meaning; cf. Banks 2004). Some of the news were mere observations of strange facts or unusual events that the author considered interesting in order to arouse some considerations and explanations from his correspondent(s). Very often such descriptions concerned monstrous creatures, as can be seen in the following letter:

I shall scruple to dispatch to you the Account I have now receiv'd of a Monster, yt was lately brought forth, & may probably be yet alive at Salisbury... On Tuesday night last, there was borne in Fisherton adionying to our Town of Salisbury a Monstrous Issue in part, the Woman has three Children Grles, ye one very well formed & fatt, the other two as you may call them hath but one Body, continued handsomely to their shoulders, from whence growth foure Armes compleatly made, two Necks & two heads very well featur'd, wth all ye parts, but they are contrary posited, one at one end of ye Body & ye other at ye other, out of ye side there is a Belly, Navell, a Woman's part, & one Fundament, & two compleat Leggs, & thighs, feet & Nayles... (Boyle to Oldenburg, [?] 30 October 1664, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 277)

As can be seen from the passage quoted above, although the facts reported denoted exceptionality and unnaturalness, their descriptions tended to be sober and neutral, as they were reported not simply to arouse interest, but mainly for epistemological and cultural reasons (Daston 1998). For this reason, these monstrous accounts were often made more reliable by the mentioning of the names of direct witnesses and of their professional qualifications. Indeed, in the letter above, Boyle specifies that the account had been reported to him by 'Dr Turbervill, a person deservedly famous in those parts for being an excellent Oculist'. Moreover, many of these accounts reflected the specialized nature of the writer as they frequently made use of highly precise terminology and often followed a well-organized structure, resembling that of an experimental account (cf. Gotti 2003, chapter 9). The objectivity of the account was also guaranteed by the faithful and neutral attitude of the correspondent transmitting the news. Indeed, in introducing his report Boyle states: 'But not having been an Eye wnesse my Selfe, all yt I can doe is faithfully to transcribe ye Relation sent me from ye Place where ye Monster was borne, in ye very words of ye Relators' ([?] 30 October 1664; in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 277).

On receiving a letter with some news about recent experiments, Oldenburg would soon reply providing the correspondent with further news about similar research taking place elsewhere, thus serving as an important kingpin in the dissemination of scientific information. For example, on receiving a letter from Hevelius about his astronomical observations by means of a telescope, he answers in this way:

We are in great hopes of seeing major advances in astronomy as the way of making telescopes is being perfected day by day. No doubt you have already heard of what is

being done at Rome, where such instruments are said to be made solely by means of a lathe, without any form... A new way of polishing lenses exactly is being worked upon by a certain famous Englishman, a fellow of the Royal Society, which is soon to be examined and tested. It consists in this... (Oldenburg to Hevelius, 13 November 1664, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 306, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

Oldenburg used his letter network to stimulate his correspondents to send him news about their work. He often did so in a very insistent way, putting pressure on his interlocutors:

I cannot conclude this letter without urging on you again and again the publication of those matters which you have yourself ruminated upon. I shall never cease to urge you until you grant my request. Meanwhile, if you were only willing to disclose to me certain chapters of their contents, oh! how I should love you, and how closely bound to you I should consider myself. (Oldenburg to Spinoza, 31 July 1663, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 100, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

The distribution of letters stimulated the establishment of valuable cooperation among experts, as is explicitly recognized by Halley himself in the following passage concerning his first personal acquaintance with Wallis:

I delivered the letter you entrusted me with to Dr. Wallis, who entertained me very kindly, and I had a great deal of discourse of an astronomical nature with him; and he, at my departure, told me he would gladly see me some other time; wherefore I reckon myself much engaged to you, for giving me [the] opportunity to come to the knowledge of a man I so much esteem. (Halley to Oldenburg, rec. 10 July 1676, in Rigaud 1965, I, 230)

This sharing of information enabled correspondents to compare their views and findings to those of distant colleagues, and integrate them with their own in the interpretation of complex phenomena, which often led to innovative theoretical conclusions. To highlight the great importance of epistolary communication in the elaboration of a new scientific theory or the creation of specific technical equipment, Boas Hall provides the following account of the development in the field of pneumatics:

The initial impulse for the first water barometer came from the reading of Galileo's *Discorsi* by members of a group in Rome, who wished to test the statement that suction pumps would not lift water more than thirty feet because that was the length of a column of water which could hold together (or, alternatively, be supported by air); but the plans for the experiment, the dissemination of its success, the suggestion for the substitution of mercury for water which led to Torricelli's experiment, the transmission of his results, and of Pascal's subsequent Puy-de-Dôme experiment – all these depended upon a network of epistolary communication quite wonderful in its achievement, for within a very few years, without the publication of a single printed

book, this important development in physics was known from Rome (where it began) eastwards to Warsaw and northwards to Sweden, and had been extensively discussed in France and England. (1975, 176)

Letters were also used as a means for gathering facts and observations on a systematic basis from correspondents based in various parts of the world. For this function, Oldenburg – acting on behalf of the Royal Society – played an important role. Here are two extracts from the letters he sent to Richard Norwood in the Bermudas and to John Winthrop in Connecticut to stimulate their contributions regarding some specific astronomical observations:

The R. Society, persuaded, Sir, of yr ability and willingness to make such Observations, not doubting you to be furnisht wth instruments necessary for it, have commanded me to desire you, to observe wth all, possible exactness ye mentioned Conjunction, and to acquaint ym with yr performances therein. If yr generosity invite you to adde hereunto, what in and about yriland occurs considerable for ye enriching of ye History of Nature (whose composure is one of ye maine things, they have in their Eye) it will be a very good service to ye Commonwealth of Learning, and a thing most acceptable to ye R. Society, and particularly obliging to

Sir

yr very humble and affect. servt

*H. Old.*

(Oldenburg to Norwood, 6 March 1663/4, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 146)

The sd Society being persuaded both of yr ability and willingness to make such Observations, and not doubting, you to be furnisht wth instruments necessary for it, have commanded me to desire you, to observe wth all possible exactnesse ye mention'd Conjunction, and to acquaint ym with yr performances therein. (Oldenburg 26 March 1664, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 149)

In this way, the great potential of letters to link people from very distant parts of the world was fully exploited. The advantages of the use of correspondence as a scientific method soon became evident and were at the basis of the creation of several international projects mainly in the field of meteorological observation (Frisinger 1977).

### *3. Promoting Experimental Practices*

Seventeenth-century experimenters were fully convinced of their innovative approach and were willing to convince the rest of the world of its validity. There was a general wish to spread the great epistemological and methodological innovations of that period (Vickers 1987; Hunter 1989; Jardine 1999; Shapiro 2000) and to socialize the discoveries made and the new ideas developed, also thanks to a collaborative spirit which inspired seventeenth-century scientists, in

contrast to the individualism that characterized philosophers in the Renaissance period. Scientists therefore wrote to colleagues around the world explaining their aims and pointing out the advantages of their research methodology. An example is the following extract from a letter written by Oldenburg to Van Dam:

It is our business, in the first place, to scrutinize the whole of Nature and to investigate its activity and powers by means of observations and experiments; and then in course of time to hammer out a more solid philosophy and more ample amenities of civilization. I set the whole matter before you briefly, for your information. Indeed I seriously urge all who perceive its importance to unite in aiding and perfecting it as best they can, and to work towards it assiduously so that at last, abandoning fictions and shadows, we may attain to knowledge of things as they are. (23 January 1662/3, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 14, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

Letters were thus used for a proselytizing purpose, particularly by those people who found their proper identification in the newly-founded Royal Society. The members of this select group often took advantage of the writing activity to inform others of the new principles they shared and to gain their consensus. Indeed, many of Oldenburg's letters were written to people active in research and experimentation in order to present the purposes of the Royal Society and stimulate their contribution and feedback. Here is the beginning of a letter to Richard Norwood:

Sir,

I am apt to believe, you may have heard, yt his Majty hath not long since founded a Corporation of a number of Ingenious and knowing persons, by ye Name of ye *Royall Society of London for improving Naturall knowledge*, whose dessein it is, by Observations and Experiments to advance ye Contemplations of Nature to Use and Practise, and to render ym more serviceable for ye necessities and accommodations of ye Life of Man. Such a Foundation being laid, ye persons thus incorporated Judge it very conducive to their purpose, to bespeake and engage all sorts of intelligent and publick-spirited men, to contribute, what they can, to so Noble and Usefull a Work. (Oldenburg to Norwood, 6 March 1663/4, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 146)

Communal correspondence had an important socializing function. Letters were written not only to exchange information, but also to promote new professional relationships and to strengthen existing links, thus favouring the formation of a new scientific community. Scholars belonging to the Royal Society considered themselves to be part of a select group of people, separating themselves from the less learned group of non-scientific practitioners. Some of the features characterizing the members of the new scientific community can be found in the following extract from a letter sent by Gascoines to Oldenburg, in which the qualities of Isaac Newton and Francis Line – although presented as adversaries from a theoretical point of view – are extolled:

Therefore in this let us suppose them equal; that they were both great scholars in their kind; great lovers of truth and haters of contest for itself; that both trusted to nothing but to their eyes and experience, nor delivered any thing but what they thought they had truly found. (15 December 1675, in Rigaud 1965, I, 223)

An important aspect of this proselytizing activity concerned the methodology to be adopted in research and experimentation, which emphasized direct experience and personal observation. Communal correspondence was often meant to encourage the readers to perform the experiments themselves. Apart from this emphasis on experimental activity, another important aspect of the new scientific approach consisted in the need for both the procedures and the results of these experiments to be made known to the entire learned world. The publicity given to the work of the members of the Royal Society would further distinguish them from the group of alchemists, who considered secrecy one of the main characteristics of their research method. This explains the wish, often expressed very strongly, that researchers should publish the results of their enquiries:

We therefore suggest that we have often heard that the worthy and learned Mr. Barrow hath divers treatises in a good forwardness for the press, and some of us have lately seen his Treatise of Optics, which he prepared to deliver in to the former Vice-Chancellor, as his anniversary lectures, according to the laudable constitution or injunction laid upon your mathematic professor; but we fear the author's modesty is such that he will not promote the publication thereof, unless excited thereunto... We are induced to believe that length of time, and the persuasion of friends, may hereafter prevail with the said Mr. Barrow to publish some other good books by him intended, as his Comment on Archimedes, on the Spherics, his own Perspective, Projections, Elements of Plane Geometry... (Oldenburg to Baldrøe, in Rigaud 1965, I, 137-138)

These new researchers were convinced that many natural philosophers in the past had been anxious to provide explanations and theories before having enough evidence to base them on, and emphasized therefore the need for an experimental approach, so as to collect abundant data from which correct generalizations could be derived. This new approach was often pointed out in the letters exchanged between natural philosophers, who frequently emphasized the basic criteria this approach was based on and invited their colleagues to pass on their ideas to other people working in specialized fields:

Our motto being *Nullius in verba*, we intend to examine these propositions by making tryals ourselves of the matters asserted therein; and ye Author of ym [i.e. Huygens] is to be urged to explicate, how he infers his universall measure from what he affirms here. (Oldenburg to Boyle, 20 October 1664, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 264-265)

The sense of belonging to this community often stimulated the writer not only to comment on the methodology and instruments employed by others,

but also to describe his own so as to suggest practical and concrete ways in which the experiments commented on could be improved:

And in particular I have wished that those sextants, at least, he makes use of for measuring the distances of stars, were furnished with telescopic sights, which is no small advantage for regulating and assisting the sights, which if he desires it, I shall be most ready to gratify him with any information, that the small experience I have in those things will furnish me with. The largest glass I have several times made use of, is a spherical lens, convex on both sides, of a sphere whose radius is 60 feet, and the focus or length of the glass is near about the same length... The tube I make use of is about 66 or 68 feet in length, and consists... I have inquired the lowest rate any such object-glass will be sold for, and find it will not be afforded for less than twenty-five pounds sterling, and the eyeglasses will cost forty or fifty shillings more. If Mr. Hevelius desire any, upon his signifying his mind to me, I shall endeavour to get him the best that can be made here, and at the lowest rate. (Hooke to Hevelius no date, in Rigaud 1965, I, 180-182)

#### 4. *Joining and Widening the Community*

Joining a letter network was often considered the first step to be admitted into a select group or an exclusive circle. The scholar, especially if young and inexperienced, would approach the correspondent in a humble way. For example, this is how Leibniz addresses his first letter to Oldenburg:

Pardon the fact that I, an unknown person, write to one who is not unknown; for to what man who has heard of the Royal Society can you be unknown? And who has not heard of the Society, if he is in any way drawn to an interest in true learning? (13 July 1670, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, VII, 64)

The writer would then introduce his work and interest and subsequently ask specific questions on a particular aspect relating to his research. When approaching a famous scholar for the first time, the person aspiring to be included in his elite circle would write a very elegant and flattering letter, lavishing great compliments on his interlocutor. This high degree of esteem was reflected in the frequent use of positive adjectives referring to personal qualities such as *celebrated, expert, great, industrious, ingenious, learned, worthy*. The use of titles and honorific adjectives was not only a way of expressing deference but also of claiming in-group membership by using terms of endearment (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996, 175):

Noble and famous Sir, my greatly-honored Patron, while my bold vessel, its anchor weighed, ventures upon the ocean waves it trusts itself to the lucky stars, that the glowing Oebalian brothers, Pollux and lucky Castor, may shine in their twin splendor. You, dear Oldenburg, are the star in the Illustrious Experimental Society's serene

firmament, to which my little bark looks as a protector. It was you, along with Mr Haak, who beamed benignly upon my fellow-countryman Ms Jacobi when he was in London last year and, at the behest of our renowned senator, Mr Hofmann of Hofmanswaldau, enquired about the genesis of the Illustrious Society. In so doing you shed some rays on me, absent though I was... You promised, renowned Sir, munificence in the communication of experiments... I beg for it most earnestly... (Sachs to Oldenburg, 12 January 1664/5, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 345, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

Scientists were very eager to be accepted within the community, particularly in those circles, like the Royal Society, that had attained a high reputation. As can be seen in the following letter, in order to be admitted they would write to Oldenburg and present their case in a very humble tone:

And therefore this is my best season, & best agreeing with the integrity & candor of my hearte, to offer my selfe by yr Mouth a Supplicant, That as yr Honble Society of their kindnesse & without my suite is pleas'd to admit mee a Member, soe at my requeste they wilbe further pleas'd to bestowe on mee the priviledges of the same fellowship. In wch I have noe other ayme then wth freedome, & under their Countenance to offer to their Teste the various kinds of thirtee years studies in practicall philosophy, wth chiefe endevors for generall accommodations... Sir, I must noe further trouble you with this requeste. That yu present mee to my most obliging friends, as most ready to serve them & all Mankind in every capacity. (Beale to Oldenburg, 15 January 1662/3, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 6-7)

Also the practice of sending letters with travellers, instead of through the post, favoured the enlargement of the community, as it enabled the bearer of the letter to meet the recipient and thus give him the possibility of introducing himself and of informing his addressee of his activities and interests. As Goldgar rightly asserts:

This means of establishing scholarly relations was a common one in the learned world. One service a scholar could do for another was to write letters of introduction for him to take on his travels. The recipient of such a letter would be enjoined to show hospitality to the bearer, including introducing him to other savants; thus one or two people in each location might serve as nodes for an ever-expanding network of acquaintance. (1995, 24)

The direct delivery of letters stimulated the establishment of valuable cooperation among experts, as is explicitly recognized by Halley himself in the following quotation concerning his first personal acquaintance with Wallis:

I delivered the letter you entrusted me with to Dr. Wallis, who entertained me very kindly, and I had a great deal of discourse of an astronomical nature with him; and he, at my departure, told me he would gladly see me some other time; wherefore I reckon myself much engaged to you, for giving me [the] opportunity to come to the

knowledge of a man I so much esteem. (Halley to Oldenburg, rec. 10 July 1676, in Rigaud 1965, I, 230)

Besides, providing the chance of initiating a new relationship between the traveller and the receiving scholar, this type of letter would also strengthen the bonds of cooperation and friendship between the writer and the addressee. The important role played by communal correspondence in enlarging the scientific community was often highlighted by Oldenburg himself. For example, in writing to Leibniz' patron, Baron von Boineburg, he expressed his wish:

That those who excel in... the sciences in our Germany would... imitate the example of England, France and Italy herself in turning to experiments. What we are about is no task for one nation or another singly. It is needful that the resources, labours, and zeal of all regions, princes and philosophers be united, so that this task of comprehending nature may be pressed forward by their care and industry. (10 August 1670, in Oldenburg 1965-1986 VII, 107)

This zealous spirit of information sharing was considered a fundamental step for the improvement of knowledge:

For it is our business, having already established under royal favor this form of assembly of philosophers who cultivate the world of arts and sciences by means of observations and experiment and who advance them in order to safeguard human life and make it more pleasant, to attract to the same purposes men from all parts of the world who are famous for their learning, and to exhort those already engaged upon them to unwearied efforts. Indeed, friendship among learned men is a great aid to the investigation and elucidation of the truth; if such friendship should be spread through the whole world of learning, and established among those whose minds are unfettered and above partisan zeal, because of their devotion to truth and human welfare, philosophy would be raised to its greatest heights. (Oldenburg to Hevelius, 18 February 1662/3, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 27, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

Correspondence was also seen as a stimulus to other people's sharing views and experiences. As Hall and Boas Hall aptly point out:

Most scientists believed... that the best way to persuade a reluctant scientist to state his views publicly was to let him know what others were doing. Often it was thought expedient not only to let X know Y's scientific ideas, but also to let X know what Y thought of X's ideas. This was a sure way to persuade X to speak out, and to develop his own theories more fully and carefully. (1965, xxii)

Scholars were pleased to cooperate with and do favours for people that were part of their community. Services and their return formed an ethic for polite society in that period (Goldgar 1995). People were asked for favours not only as scholars but also as gentlemen.

### 5. *Defending Oneself from False Accusations*

The writing of a letter to be made public was sometimes prompted by the author's need to defend himself against accusations from adversaries or possible attacks from public authorities. This is the case, for example, of the letter written by Denis to Oldenburg (and then published in the *Philosophical Transactions*) describing a case of blood transfusion in a period in which such procedure was considered very risky. In this letter, Denis provided a lengthy and detailed account of the transfusion of calf's blood to a mentally ill patient, who subsequently died. The letter was thus meant to defend the author's personal and professional reputation. This is the reason why at the beginning of the letter, the writer clearly stated that the practice of transfusion was not prohibited by the Magistrates of London and that this operation had been carried out successfully in many cases:

Sir, you have sensibly obliged me to have assured me by your Letter of April 29, that the Magistrates of London had not at all concern'd themselves to prohibit the Practice of the Transfusion of Blood, and that that operation had been hitherto practiced with good success on Brutes, and without any ill consequence on man. (*Philosophical Transactions* 1668 III, 710-723)

Letters could also serve in case of controversy. The author would reject criticisms in a firm but polite way. This is shown by the frequent use of hedging expressions, as highlighted in the following extract:

Sir,

Together with my most hearty thanks for the favour you were pleased to do to me, in sending me an Epitome of what had been by the ingenious Monsieur Auzout animadverted on a description, I had made of an engine for grinding spherical Glasses, *I thought my self obliged*, both for your satisfaction, and my own Vindication, to return you my present thoughts upon those Objections. The chief of which *seems to be* against the very Proposition itself: For *it appears*, that the Objector is *somewhat* unsatisfied, that I should propound a thing in Theory, without having first tried the Practicableness of it. But first, *I could wish* that this worthy Person had rectified my mistakes, not by speculation, but by experiments. (Hooke to Oldenburg, [?] May 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 383, my emphasis)

Also the reply to this self-justification – which expresses further perplexity and disagreement – is formulated in a highly polite and cooperative tone:

*He will please forgive me* then if I continue to doubt the worth of his machine in spite of his reply and if I wait until he has made it work before retracting what I said in my comments... But *I feel myself obliged* for the sake of the truth and in order to explain some places which Mr Hooke has not interpreted according to my meaning to make some comments on his reply, in approximately the same order, *which I shall try to do*

*as briefly as possible.* (Auzout to Oldenburg, 22 June 1665, in Oldenburg, 1965-1986, II, 419, original in French, translated by the editors, my emphasis)

The role played by Oldenburg in these controversies was that of the intermediary, who however was not totally passive but acted as a sort of referee highlighting the rules of polite conversation that should be followed by gentlemen when they disagreed in their views or argued over experimental results:

Mr Hooke salutes you, and affirms that he is very particularly obliged to you for your conduct towards him, in the letter you addressed to me. Surely, Sir, it is indeed the right way to manage a correspondence between two worthy men and fine minds, when each expresses to the other his thoughts and discoveries in a frank and polite way, without offence given or taken, so that their minds may reciprocally stimulate each other and learn from each other, to the further progress of knowledge. If you please to continue in such conduct towards the author of *Micrographia* (who is certainly very learned in mathematics and mechanics) I can promise you that you will find him free and generous in acknowledging your civilities, and capable of recompensing you for the discoveries you may please to communicate to him. If you wish, I will be the go-between, since you do not know enough English to write to him nor he enough French to reply. (Oldenburg to Auzout, 23 July 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 441-442, original in French, translated by the editors)

In their correspondence seventeenth-century scientists were very keen to point out that *ad hominem* accusations should be avoided and that respect should always be paid even to those with whom one disagreed. What distinguished a gentleman's behaviour, therefore, was his respect for the person whose views he was criticising and his limiting his objections to the points he saw as incorrect without any unfair recourse to excessive aggressiveness. According to this view, *ad hominem* argument was deemed unacceptable, as criticism should be directed towards the debated matter rather than the opponents:

My dessein in all, I write, being none else but ye search the Truth, without prepossessing myselfe either for my owne conceptions, or against those of others, (as I think every Philosopher ought to doe) me thinks, yt ye true means of succeeding therein, is, to explain as cleerly as we can our thoughts; and when we are obliged to combat with those of others, to doe it without ay offensive expressions. (Auzout to Oldenburg, 12 August 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 468, original in French, translated by Oldenburg)

The civility of a scientist's behaviour could also be seen from the way in which, even when objecting to a certain methodological supposition, he was grateful to the person who expressed it. Indeed, in the course of the discussion the contestants kept repeating that the purpose of their objections was to clarify their own positions and not simply to quarrel. To soften the tone of the divergence of opinions, the writer frequently made use of hedging expressions, as can be seen in the use of *it appears* and *he seems* in the following passages:

For it appears, that the Objector is somewhat unsatisfied, that I should propound a thing in theory, without having first tried the Practicableness of it. (Hooke to Oldenburg, [?] May 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 383)

I have Mr Branker's (accompanied with sheet X) wherein he seems not fully to understand my meaning, which, that it may not be mistaken, I shall here more fully enlarge. (Collins to Pell, 9 April 1667, in Rigaud 1965, I, 125)

The civility that scientists adopted in their discussions is also shown by their natural way of presenting opinions and evaluating objections in a cooperative and respectful atmosphere. Indeed, the 'challenged' author usually showed his cooperative attitude by trying to make his points clearer:

Next, I have this to answer, that (though I did not tell the Reader so much, to the end that he might have the more freedom to examine and judge of the contrivance, yet) it was not meer Theory I propounded, but somewhat of History and matter of fact: For, I had made trials, as many as my leisure would permit, not without some good success. (Hooke to Oldenburg, [?] May 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 383)

If necessary, the 'challenged' author would provide further testimony to support his argumentation:

Thus I hope I have cleared those doubts, which may be thought considerable, in that little treatise I gave you. In it I affected brevity as much as possible, as knowing that it most respected the learned in astronomy; and to all such I doubt not, but what I here send you will be a sufficient demonstration. (Halley to Oldenburg, rec. 10 July 1676, in Rigaud 1965, I, 235)

The adoption of a 'civil' style thus implied that the scientist should always be open to criticism and willing to reconsider his conclusions once it had been proved to him that other theories were more convincing than his. The correct behaviour of the parties involved in a controversy is clearly underlined in their correspondence, where they emphasized that in this way they were contributing to the growth of scientific knowledge:

You will judge my sincerity, Sir, by this discussion, and will oblige me by testifying to it with Mr. Hooke whom I hold in high esteem, and if I have written that he wanted to discover animals in the moon, I did not think I was putting words in his mouth after what he had written in his preface and repeated in his reply and which you repeated again in your letter. However this may be, I assure you that everything has been done in the interest of discovering truth, without any thought of profit from my ideas or his replies. (Auzout to Oldenburg, 25 September 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 518, original in French, translated by the editors)

The polite tone, however, would not prevent the writer from expressing his criticism with frankness. This too was considered to be part of a sincere relationship and honest behaviour:

For I judged that I would be ill-advised to keep absolute silence on these points when replying to you. Yet to praise those things which pleased me little would be nothing but sheer flattery, which I consider most dangerous and pernicious in friendship. I therefore decided to open my mind to you very frankly; and I thought that nothing would be more welcome to philosophers than this. (Oldenburg to Spinoza, 31 July 1663, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 96, original in Latin, translated by the editors)

Sometimes criticism was expressed in an indirect way, with the critic conveying his negative evaluation to others but not wishing the object of criticism to be aware of the source of criticism. This is the case in the following letter:

My mention of Mr. Mercator puts me in mind of a thing, which may be acceptable to you, that is, that... in his example of Cassini's and his own method, whereby he would shew the insufficiency of Dr. Ward's theory, he hath mistaken in his calculus, and neglected to account for the motion of the aphelion... If you shall think fit, you may let Mr. Mercator know as much; but I desire that, if you do, you would please to conceal my name. (Halley to Oldenburg, rec. 10 July 1676, in Rigaud 1965, I, 227)

### 6. *Claiming Precedence*

Letters were also used to solve conflicts and disputes over priority. Indeed, many of Oldenburg's correspondents made use of his letter network as they considered it an excellent system for making an official claim to experimental precedent. See, for example, the exchange of letters in the period 1669/1671 between Lister, Ray, Hulse and Oldenburg over who first reported the way in which spiders cast their threads, examined in detail by Valle (2003). Ray and Lister had been corresponding about the results of their observations of spiders, but only Ray had been able to report such results to the Royal Society. Lister therefore decided to write to Oldenburg, the Secretary of the Royal Society, to claim the same right as Ray to be held responsible for these discoveries:

This Sr, is ye truth of ye business; wch Mr Wray will not deny & his letters will sufficiently evidence: yt ye observation is as well mine, as his, from whom Me Wray had first notice of it & yt I was not in ye least beholden to him for it: but yt I writ it to Mr Wray, not as a thing altogether unknown to him, but to confirme & enlarge it by ye addition of my owne observations. (Lister to Oldenburg, 9 August 1670, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, VII, 105)

For the fulfilment of this important function of publicising innovative results and thus attributing official recognition and granting a patent of originality to their authors, Oldenburg openly proposed himself as a public certifier:

I acknowledge, yt yt yealousy, about the first Authors of Experiments, wch you speak off, is not groundlesse: And therefore offer myselfe, to register all those, you or any

person shall please to communicate, as new, wth yt fidelity, wch both of ye honor of my relation to the R. Society (wch is highly concernd in such experiments) an my owne inclinations doe strongly oblige me to. (Oldenburg to Boyle, 29 August 1665, in Oldenburg 1965-1986, II, 486)

The detailed and accurate description of a personal scientific experience was considered one of the requisites for transforming a personal account into an official protocol to be submitted to the broad community of men of science. Indeed, the establishment of priority in discoveries often led to acrimonious disputes and made the assertion of one's priority a face-threatening act, particularly in those cases in which an unfair attempt to attribution had been deliberately made. In such cases, the careful and objective narration of one's experiments could instead provide the materials for proper scrutiny and reliable judgement, and thus permit the transformation of personal results into facts widely accepted by the scientific world. Having obtained in this way the consensus of a wider public, experimental data could then become 'matters of fact' and part of scientists' shared culture.

### 7. Conclusion

The analysis carried out in this article has shown the great variety and importance of the functions performed by scientific communal correspondence in seventeenth-century England. Indeed, in the early phases of the dissemination of specialized discourse, the letter was the predominant form of scientific communication. However, the communicative role of this writing activity was not merely limited to the informative aspect. Scientific communal correspondence also fulfilled other important goals linked to socialization purposes, favouring the creation of a spirit of solidarity among the members of a new social group sharing innovative intellectual interests and professional practices. By providing a relatively inexpensive channel of communication, scientific communal letters helped scholarship and encouraged scientists to publicize their work, thus favouring the growth of the sciences themselves.

In the following decades, scientific communal correspondence was almost totally substituted by the scientific journal, which evolved as a means of dissemination of specialized news. However, although greater emphasis was given to news items and experimental accounts, letters continued to thrive and be published in specialized journals. In particular, correspondence with Oldenburg continued also after the foundation of the *Philosophical Transactions* as the writers hoped their letters and reports would be published in the journal. They often adopted a curious fiction, continuing to write letters to him but with an eye to publication, although not overtly mentioning this possibility in their correspondence. In this way, the popularisation of epistolary communication greatly favoured the advancement of science by disseminat-

ing those new patterns of scientific communication that were required by the specialized community that had formed in England in the seventeenth century.

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# Language and Letters in Samuel Richardson's Networks

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## *Abstract*

This article aims to provide an overview of Samuel Richardson's social networks, with a special focus on the stylistic features of epistolary exchanges between the novelist and other members of his circles. In the light of the social network theory, which investigates linguistic variations and changes influenced by discourse communities, the present research paper mainly concerns aspects related to register, and investigates the influence of Richardson's 'dramatic style' upon the members of his epistolary networks, as well as the interpersonal involvement strategies he deploys with regard to the addressee and his/her discourse.

*Keywords:* Correspondence, Involvement Strategies, Samuel Richardson, Social Networking

## 1. *Introduction*

In 1751 Miss Susanna Highmore, daughter of the painter Joseph Highmore, sketched a group of Samuel Richardson's friends, as they listened to the novelist reading from the manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Assembled in Richardson's 'grotto of instruction', six of the novelist's admirers sit in elegant attitudes and listen to the latest instalment of Sir Charles's adventures, probably after many long hours spent both writing letters to the author about his hero's marriage and reading his replies. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), printer, novelist, compulsive author of volumes of letters to friends and acquaintances, was from the early 1740s onwards both at the centre and part of various networks dominated by domestic as well as scholarly and literary activities and mainly sustained by correspondence (Barbault 2011; Carroll 1964). His circles consisted of poets, scholars and especially of educated gentry women, such as lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, Sarah Wescomb, Anne Donnellan, Susanna Highmore, Hester Mulso, Anne Dewes, who were the protagonists of a lifelong commitment to Richardson and the familiar letter (Eaves and Kimpel 1971).<sup>1</sup>

As is well known, in the age of the Republic of Letters, letter writing came into prominence for social and cultural reasons, as well as purely literary ones. An emblem of the private domain, the letter performed, in fact, its actual functions

as an agent of the public exchange of knowledge, presenting itself as a peculiar hybrid of the personal and the public, as a text concerning both the private and the public sphere, 'as precious scraps of handwritten paper intended for a single reader, still bearing their broken seals, scrawled directions, and postmarks, and, at the same time, as neatly printed pages circulating in multiple copies and marketed to an avid reading public' (Cook 1996, 2). The introduction and development of reliable postal services favoured the growth of 'real communities of adepts' who used the interactiveness of correspondence as an excellent means for the exchange of views and factual information (Gotti 2006). Letter writing handbooks, scientific treatises and political pamphlets, botanical reports and poetical epistles were just a few examples of the many fields in which communication was conveyed through letters: Newton's studies on optics were circulated by means of a series of letters to the Royal Society, and texts submitted to the *Philosophical Transactions*, the Society's journal, were published as letters.

If communal correspondence within the scientific circles served to spread views and experiments, or to widen the community (Gotti 2006), the correspondence of Richardson's networks was mainly focused on domestic and intellectual affairs, as well as on the discussion of social and ethical values. Moreover, in Richardson's and his correspondents' epistles, which he began to collect in 1741, the letters and the people mentioned are also intertwined with the letters and the characters of his novels, each group participating in the universe of the other, and affecting the language of the other.

In the light of the social network theory, which investigates linguistic variations and changes influenced by discourse communities, the present article aims at highlighting some aspects of the structure and content of Richardson's networks as recorded by their epistolary exchanges. Against a cultural and literary background which presented a major development of reading practices, Richardson's unique and conscious encouragement of his readers to contribute to the factual making of his epistolary novels has been studied and interpreted in various ways, as a desire to control and reform reading, or to lead his readers to moral regeneration, or to respond to a competitive market (Whyman 2007; Keymer 1992). Surprisingly, especially considering an author like Richardson, what has received less attention are the linguistic and stylistic strategies employed to pursue his moral and commercial project.

My analysis is grounded in a historical perspective and I shall try to contextualize the letters and illustrate the main problems related to Richardson's correspondence as far as preservation, location and reliability are concerned. Then, I shall present his correspondents and his network clusters and finally I will concentrate on the question of discourse styles and practices that may be associated with particular registers or genres (Tieken-Boon 2000 and 2008; Sairio 2009b), thus investigating the ways in which the language of these letters may correlate with the topic they deal with (Tieken-Boon 2009; Fitzmaurice 2002). In doing so, I shall provide a qualitative analysis of some extracts of Richardson's out- and in-letters,<sup>2</sup> focusing on

instances of stylistic strategies which, in most cases, aim at including the addressee's utterance within the addresser's epistolary communication.

## 2. *The Corpus: Historical Issues, Methodological and Epistemological Problems*

### 2.1 *Richardson's Correspondence*

The story of Richardson's private correspondence is long and tormented. At the same time as he was involved in the complex gestation of his novels, at least of *Clarissa* and *Grandison*, Richardson began an intense epistolary exchange with a large number of correspondents. The undertaking as a whole was so great that he himself thought of it as a work in itself. He first mentions his project to collect and publish his own private letters in his letter to Thomas Edwards dated 27 January 1755: his aim was the pleasure of reading them for himself and for his family members after his death. The project, he writes, will involve an accurate selection, with the consequent elimination of irrelevant material and a precise request to the various correspondents for authorisation to publish them (Carroll 1964, 317-318).

The decision to implement this plan sounds like a real undertaking to those who know how much effort Richardson put into his prolific correspondence with friends and acquaintances, mainly on the subject of his fictional writing; there came a point when his friend Joseph Spence was prompted to urge him to 'take up a resolution (which perhaps may be new to you) of neither trusting others, nor distrusting yourself too much' (Barbault 2011, I, 320). However, Richardson continued his activity undaunted, weaving a voluminous amount of correspondence with a large number of acquaintances, all members of the intellectual bourgeoisie, and, among these, many young women.

There are few extant letters dating from the period before *Pamela*, and information about their story is learnt indirectly from subsequent ones (see the letter to Johannes Stinstra dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1753, Carroll 1964, 228-235). The first letter to have been published is probably the one Richardson wrote to his nephew, Thomas Verren Richardson, an apprentice printer, in 1732. The epistle, full of advice and instructions, was revised and published in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum: or Young Man's Companion* (1733), after the premature death of the boy. From 1734 onwards Richardson cultivated a constant and intense exchange with the doctor and literary man George Cheyne, one of the frankest and indeed most pungent critics of *Pamela* and its *sequel*. On the death of Cheyne, in 1743, Richardson had already collected eighty-two letters and had copied them into a separate exercise book, complete with a preface dated 11<sup>th</sup> August 1744.<sup>3</sup> Another important correspondent of the first period is the poet, playwright and critic Aaron Hill, with whom Richardson continued to correspond until 1750. Some letters dedicated to various aspects of *Clarissa*, starting from the length of the plot, were included in a collection in 1753, published after the death of Hill in order to procure funds to support his three daughters.

It was after the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54) that Richardson began the systematic organisation of his correspondence with a view to publishing it. He organised it into volumes and carried out a general revision, which involved modifying texts, eliminating entire parts, even changing the names of the correspondents: Aaron Hill and his daughters, Edward Young, Thomas Edwards, Sarah Chapone, Sarah Westcomb, naturally Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, and others. The letter to Lady Bradshaigh dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 1757 bears witness to the effort and investment that Richardson seems to bestow on this undertaking (Carroll 1964, 335). It is the founding letter of the *Epistolary*, and the pride, even the vanity of the author emerge clearly: private correspondence has to be arranged according to organisational and narrative dynamics similar to those of novels, he writes, and a perspective of critical writing is added lucidly.

In 1757 the German bookseller Erasmus Reich proposed to publish a selection of letters, but Richardson replied with drastic requests: publication only in German, after formal permission requested by the novelist from the correspondents, anonymity. Nothing came of the project, nor of his nephew William Richardson's proposal to publish the selection in 1781, twenty years after the death of the novelist. It was only in 1804, after the death of Richardson's last daughter, Anne, and of all the correspondents, except Susanna Highmore, that the letters were sold to the publisher Richard Phillips who appointed the writer and essayist Anna Laetitia Barbauld to edit the correspondence, which came out in six volumes.

*The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Author of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison. Selected from the Original Manuscripts, Bequeathed by Him to His Family, To which are Prefixed, a Biographical Account of that Author and Observations on his Writings by Anna Laetitia Barbauld* (1804) is still today the richest and most complete collection of Richardson's letters. The volumes contain approximately 400 letters, a third of which written by Richardson (but it has been established that 560 more letters by Richardson and 1060 letters by his correspondents still exist).<sup>4</sup> The main and most serious criticism that may be directed at Barbauld certainly concerns philological accuracy; the editor herself states in the Introduction that the choice of letters is dictated only by her own taste, guided by 'the necessary office of selection' (Barbauld 2011, I, ccviii). Barbauld inherited material on which Richardson had been the first to exercise the role of editor, and it must also be remembered that the editorial style typical of the period followed very different criteria from those used today; nevertheless, Barbauld's editorial freedom is stunning: she shortens texts, omits dates or transcribes others erroneously, she attributes letters to the wrong correspondents, changes spelling and punctuation, summarises a number of letters into a single letter, without ever indicating this type of intervention on her part (McCarthy 2001).<sup>5</sup> However, the letters chosen by Barbauld are the ones to be remembered, and precisely by virtue of the procedures of the period, when the editor had become and must therefore be considered as 'a mediating author' (Palander-Collin 2010).

Other collections, not as rich as that of 1804, though perhaps more accurate, include George Cheyne's letters edited by C.F. Mullett, the 1969 edition of letters to and from Johannes Stinstra edited by William Slattery (Slattery 1969), and the important collection of 111 letters from Edward Young (Pettit, ed., 1971). John Carroll's 1964 edition deserves a special mention: he proposes a selection of 128 letters, all by Richardson, in chronological order, with accurate transcriptions, and based on handwritten sources, wherever possible. Only a part of these coincides with Barbauld's letters and the attention paid by Carroll to letters with a literary theme makes the collection all the more valuable, since it makes it possible to trace Richardson's critical stance regarding his own writing and that of his contemporaries directly.

There still remain approximately seven hundred handwritten letters, some of which are either kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum or scattered in various collections. It is also for this reason that critical works dedicated to this correspondence are very few – Malvin Zirker's pages dating back to the middle of the Sixties being, perhaps, the only specific essay (Zirker 1966).<sup>6</sup> What is more, many of the studies related to letters are based on electronic corpora, a resource which is in fact unavailable for Richardson's letters.<sup>7</sup>

In the early twenty-first century an ambitious project has been undertaken by Cambridge University Press with the aim to collect all of Richardson's letters and those of his correspondents, with Peter Sabor and Tom Keymer as general editors, thus giving readers a chance to read Richardson without any intermediation (Sabor 1989; Ticken-Boon 1991).<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Richardson's Network Clusters

The decade from 1742 to 1754, in which Richardson wrote and published his two bulkiest novels, *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), is also the period in which he increased his epistolary exchanges with groups of friends and acquaintances.

Richardson's collected correspondence shows that a few network clusters can be identified; the strength of their ties, as well as their density and multiplexity vary over time: the connections between network members overlap and are more or less frequent and extended (Sairio 2009a).<sup>9</sup> Some of the members were invited to Richardson's houses, in London, at Salisbury Court and at North End, and later at Parson's Green, but since the novelist's writings and opinions were almost the only subject treated in the letters and the roles played by the writers did not change, Richardson's circles may be considered a closed network, in that members were accepted and encouraged to participate only if they satisfied precise prerequisites.

Aaron Hill (1685-1750), who lived in Plainstow, and the poet Edward Young (1681-1765), who came from Hertfordshire, were certainly Richardson's chief advisers during the composition of *Clarissa*, and Thomas Edwards

was his closest friend at about the time of the composition of *Grandison*.<sup>10</sup> Edwards's relationship with Richardson is exemplary as far as the construction of ties in Richardson's networks is concerned. Edwards lived in Turrick, near Ellesborough in Buckinghamshire; he was a landscape gardener, and a bachelor, ten years younger than Richardson; his first letter to Richardson, full of praise for *Clarissa*, dates back to the end of 1748, but by April 1750 he was visiting North End, and by June he had been at Salisbury Court several times. He was then introduced at the houses of Richardson's friends Mrs. Donnellan and Miss Mulso, and in a few months his letters present passages that express opinions on various members of the community and show his intimate knowledge of Richardson's friends' lives.

Other correspondents of Richardson's networks were the grammarian Salomon Lowe, the painter Joseph Highmore, Edward Moore, Stephen Duck, 'the thresher poet', Ralph Allen, Samuel Lobb, Colley Cibber, Samuel Johnson, William Warburton: they visited Richardson's homes and, both as senders and addressees, were among his most fervent correspondents and protagonists of his writing strategies.

Female correspondents, however, played a different part in Richardson's personal epistolary story. Biographers and critics agree in describing Richardson as 'a shy, diffident man, who found it difficult to meet people socially... he was unable to meet such men as Garrick, Johnson, or Fielding on equal terms, and he retreated to the more congenial circle of feminine admirers and mild-mannered men who were willing to pay court to him' (Zirker 1966, 85; McKillop 1960; Eaves and Kimpel 1971).

Actually, women dominate Richardson's correspondence only after the completion of *Clarissa*, but the company of young women, his 'adopted daughters', as he called them, who were encouraged to write regular letters to their 'Papa', is a recurrent trait in his life: he used to reproach the reluctant writers, soliciting their letters even when they were his guests, in his own house, at Parson's Green, or at North End.<sup>11</sup> A few correspondents may be singled out: the most important one is certainly Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, his 'ideal reader', who started their correspondence 'in disguise' under the pseudonym of Belfour and who never broke off their exchanges till Richardson's death. Miss Sarah Westcomb and Miss Frances Grainger were two more of his favourites. Sarah is the addressee of one of the most famous familiar letters dating back to 1746, an actual 'ode to correspondence', in which Richardson dictates the rules and the meaning of communal letter writing, celebrating correspondence as a form of communication to be preferred to conversation, defining it as 'the cement of friendship' and considering it a physical substitute for the correspondent herself.

What charming advantages, what high delights, my dear, good, and condescending Miss Westcomb, flow from the familiar correspondences of friendly and undesigning hearts... This correspondence is, indeed, the cement of friendship: it is friendship avowed

under hand and seal: friendship upon bond, as I may say: more pure, yet more ardent, and less broken in upon, than personal conversation can be even amongst the most pure, because of the deliberation it allows, from the very preparation to, and action of writing.

A proof of this appears in the letter before me! – Every line of it flowing with that artless freedom, that noble consciousness of honourable meaning, which shine in every feature, in every sentiment, in every expression of the fair writer!

While I read it, I have you before me in person: I converse with you... I see you, I sit with you, I talk with you; I read to you, I stop to hear your sentiments, in the summer-house: your smiling obligingness, your polite and easy expression, even your undue diffidence, are all in my eye and my ear as I read. – Who than [sic!] shall decline the converse of the pen? The pen that makes distance, presence; and brings back to sweet remembrance all the delights of presence; which makes even presence but body, while absence becomes the soul; and leaves no room for the intrusion of breakfast-calls, or dinner or supper direction, which often broke in upon us. (Barbauld 2011, III, 244-249)

The Collier sisters and Sarah Fielding, the novelist's sister, formed another cluster: their correspondence covers approximately a decade from the end of the 1740s to 1757. *Clarissa* is the main subject of their letters and both Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding were among the defenders of the heroine and her behaviour.

Finally, two main female circles have to be taken into consideration, and it is a matter of age which distinguishes them and determines the kind of relationship and the style of writing. The first group, his 'adopted sisters', was formed by Mrs. Mary Delany, Mrs. Anne Dewes, who was Mrs. Delany's sister, Mrs. Anne Donnellan, Miss Isabella Sutton, and Mrs. Sarah Chapone, all friends of Mrs. Delany. The second circle, more closely connected with the composition of *Sir Charles Grandison*, was formed by younger women, like Susanna Highmore, Hester Mulso and Mary Prescott. All these women knew each other and were all bluestockings, interested in conversation and art and literature, though intimacy was greater within each group rather than between the groups; last but not least, all of them possessed what Susan Whyman calls 'epistolary literacy', 'a skill that Samuel Richardson will manipulate to his advantage' (2007, 579).<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 *Methodological and Epistemological Problems, or 'Making the Best Use of Bad Data'*

The most effective research model, which helps in the study of the potential consequences of discourse communities both on a linguistic and a social level, is the Social Network Analysis (SNA). In Sairio's words, if a social network can be defined as 'a dynamic web of people who are connected to each other in various capacities', SNA studies 'those connections and their influence on individual behaviour. The value of social network analysis in linguistics derives from its focus on the structures of relationships that have the potential to shed light on language change and linguistic influences' (Sairio 2009a, 108).

The 'bad data problem', however, is the key challenge for historical linguists (Labov 1994; Nevalainen 1999), especially when working on letters which are considered a patchy source, because of their state of preservation or because the reciprocal exchanges are not always available. This is certainly so for Richardson's letters, lost or scattered in various collections, printed and at times altered, and even rephrased.

That a complete inventory of the letters of Richardson and his correspondents would be of invaluable importance for Richardsonian studies is indisputable. However, one cannot help nurturing a certain amount of scepticism towards a hypothetical corpus *sine glossa* which would give the reader the impression of a presumed purity of an original text, obtained following a rigorous and complete chronological sequence and also through the supposed real replies of Richardson's correspondents. Besides the controversial completeness and philological accuracy of the texts collected, which have already been compromised by the intervention of the author himself and of various editors, my claim is that the basic problem remains hermeneutic, linked as it is to the very identity of the eighteenth-century *familiar letter* as a text type, in which the truth-fiction borderline is much more blurred than that to be expected from a product in non fiction prose. The epistemological statute of the 18th century letter is based on public and private dynamics and its objectivity and authenticity of discourse may be illusory, in that, even from a linguistic perspective, letters were not 'thoughtless outpourings' but the result of considerable effort (Anderson *et al.*, eds, 1966, 273; Cattaneo 1999), especially in the case of highly literate writers, such as scholars or public figures. Epistolary communication provided an ambiguous message of which authors seemed to be very much aware of: spontaneity and immediacy were presented as the distinguishing traits of a private letter and thus Johnson writes to Mrs Thrale (27 October 1777): 'In a Man's Letters you know, Madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process' (Johnson 1952, 228). But it is again Johnson who, apparently contradicting himself, reveals: 'There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse. A friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character' (Johnson 1905, 207). Eventually, a letter is a rhetorical act, an artefact, both in content and in style, as distant as possible from the image of the letter as *foenestra in pectore*.

This is all the more the case if we move from a single letter to an entire correspondence, whose meaning is redefined by other aspects: a correspondence cannot be read as 'a mere number of letters which remain as they are and whose significance remains unchanged with their re-inscription in a wider text: it is a *collection* of letters, or rather the fruit of a narrativisation which entails the transformation of the performative aspect of the letter into a narration' (Locatelli 1992, 350; my translation), shifting thereby the interest from historic-epistemological to semiotic-structural.

Last but not least, it might also be claimed that Richardson's case suggests other aspects to be taken into consideration by virtue of his profession, which affected his

very identity: Richardson was a printer at heart and, as recorded in his biographies, his activity determined his whole life. In his first arrangement of the correspondence he had already modified the supposed originals, and it may not be far from the truth to argue that his manuscript letters were literally conceived in print.

For all these reasons, I need to 'make the best use of bad data', and I will thus rely on the extant collections of Richardson's letters, primarily on the Barbauld and Carroll editions.

### 3. *Language and Letters*

Typesetter, printer, editor, author, Samuel Richardson covered all the necessary roles and stages which make up the writing process. However, he has also been studied and appreciated as an innovator of language as far as grammatical, syntactic and lexical aspects are concerned (Tieken-Boon 1987): Dr. Johnson acknowledged him as a 'word-maker', admired his ability to transmit feelings through words (Eaves & Kimpel 1971, 338), and repeatedly quoted him in his *Dictionary* (1755).

Richardson's influence should be understood in the light of his social and socio-linguistic collocation. Geographically and socially mobile, he belonged to a lower-class family, 'a Family of middling Note', as he writes to Johannes Stinstra.<sup>13</sup> He moved to London from Macworth, Derbyshire, and, though the son of a joiner, he became a wealthy and established printer, and the owner of his own printing house. As a printer artisan who, therefore, belonged to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, Richardson did not have a classical education: in his letters he defines himself as a businessman with all the duties and limits that this entails. At the same time, however, his role as an author brought him into contact with the languages and styles of the upper class, with people and personalities who were to become models for the favourite characters in his novels. This is a recurrent concern in his correspondence and when writing to ladies who are members of the aristocracy, he often takes pains to ask for advice about expressions considered appropriate for their environment.

Sharing the background of the less affluent classes but elevated by both his entrepreneurial and his literary successes, Richardson is part of an interesting socio-linguistic class which straddles various sectors: he is thus the bearer of a linguistic *in-between-ness* characterised by profound insecurity and conservatism but, in fact, also by the possibility of being seen as a language innovator.<sup>14</sup> From a socio-linguistic point of view, Richardson is an *outsider* and belongs to a category able to convey linguistic changes, which are not possible within groups in which linguistic norms are already consolidated: innovations usually come from the margins, from those grey areas in which bonds and ties are at their weakest (Milroy 1980). Tieken-Boon investigates Richardson's position as an outsider in Samuel Johnson's circle, where the only strong tie he cultivated was with Johnson himself, who showed great appreciation towards the novelist, his works, and his ethical values (Tieken-Boon 1991, 2009). As a member on the

margins of Johnson's network, Richardson was able to play the role of the *actual innovator*, while Johnson was the *early adopter*, 'the innovation being adopted by Dr Johnson and spread as a result of his prestige among the members of his group' (Tieken-Boon 1991, 49-50).<sup>15</sup>

In spite of all this, the potential influence of Richardson's style on his correspondents' familiar letters, and the impact of his letters as far as his epistolary stylistic strategies are concerned have been largely neglected and are worthy of investigation. Among similar examples of epistolary liaisons where almost only one side of the writing couple may be read, Richardson offers a special and favourable case in that his personal letters may be defined as less one-sided than others. What I claim is that Richardson develops linguistic and stylistic strategies aiming both at an interpersonal and linguistic involvement of the addressee: in doing so he enhances the conversational quality of epistolary exchanges and, ultimately, teaches a grammar of affectivity, which had quite a few enthusiastic learners, especially among his female correspondents.

In the following paragraphs, I have selected three correspondents in order to present three representative examples of those stylistic strategies and show how Richardson draws the addressee towards his side of the epistolary communication.

### 3.1 *Edward Moore: Towards a Dramatic Style*

Along with the issues typical of the familiar letter, such as long descriptions of daily routines, or discussions dedicated to the relationship between parents and children, or to the signs of friendship, the most recurrent topic debated among Richardson's correspondents was literary writing, or rather Richardson's literary writing. He was the focus or *ego* of those circles because of his innovatory strategy in planning the plots of his novels through the help and practical advice of his correspondents. The personalities and sentiments of his characters were debated thanks to the exchange of letters which embedded long excerpts of 'dialogues in letters' among the characters of his novels, to be commented, amended, abridged, or otherwise changed. His correspondents were well aware of the fact that the man they exchanged letters with was a novelist and their exchanges resulted not only in examples of literary criticism *ante litteram*, but also of creative writing in that the writer was expected not only to discuss the actions and words of the characters, but also to contribute to the very writing of the narration.

The writer was called on to structure his/her own discourse in an appropriate manner and style which required meeting precise stylistic criteria and in doing so he/she also defined and drew the boundaries of a precise community. This procedure resulted in a particular epistolary production, a sort of subgenre endowed with its own peculiar features, both from a stylistic and a pragmatic perspective.

In a letter to Edward Moore, Richardson gives us one of the most effective examples into the procedure of close reading and creative writing that the novelist practised with his correspondents (Carroll 1964, 118-122; see Appendix).<sup>16</sup>

The subject of the exchange is the episode of Lovelace's death in *Clarissa*. As is well known, Lovelace is the rake and libertine of the story, who abducts and rapes Clarissa; he dies in a duel with Clarissa's cousin, Morden, and the event is described by De la Tour, Lovelace's valet. Moore is objecting to the very writing strategy adopted by Richardson and in particular to the voice and point of view chosen to tell the story; Richardson replies, confirming his decisions and giving reasons for this.<sup>17</sup>

The addressee's letter, mentioned in the very first lines ('You have done me great Honour, and given me great Pleasure, by yours of the 23<sup>rd</sup>'), is brought literally inside the page: the words of the addressee are quoted in this case by a tagged direct speech, in order to be commented on, point by point:

[1] You say, Sir, that 'Lovelace shd have given Belford an acct. of his own Remorses after the Duel, or, if that had been improper Morden might have visited him privately, and have written the acct. himself.' Run thro' the Body, delirious, vomiting Blood, the first was impossible: To the second I answer – Morden was wounded himself – They fought in the Austrian dominion: It was concerted that the survivor to avoid public animadversions shd. make off to the Venetian territories.

[2] You wish, Sir, that 'this acct. had been given by any but a Servant.' Shall we suppose that Mowbray or Tourville had been sent abroad with him (Belford was too much engaged) Mowbray wd. have given a Brutal or Farcical acct., if I had respected his Character, as he did of Lovelace's delirious behaviour on the first communication of Clarissa's death...

[3] 'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' – I have a few things to offer on this head, after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in Letter CXI *a very few days before* the Duel, that there could not be a necessity for any persons giving an acct. of them after in was fought. ... 'Then *seeming* ejaculation, – then speaking inwardly but so as not to be understood' – how affecting such a circumstance in such a Man! And at last with his wonted haughtiness of spirit – *LET THIS EXPIATE* all his apparent Invocation and address to the *SUPREME*. Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit, with respect to the Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace! (Carroll 1964, 118-122)

This is a strategy Richardson usually follows as a reaction to the addressee's absence typical of epistolary form. In this special case, however, rather than a confrontation with the interlocutor's 'here and now' world, the pragmatic procedures of the letter focus on fictional plots, and on the 'here and now' of the fictional characters, according to ideological and cultural schemata, apparently shared by both correspondents (Fitzmaurice 2002). The writer seems to appeal to the reader by quoting Lovelace's or Morden's voices from the novel, in an interplay between orality features and literary dialogues. Thus, if the subject of the letter is closely connected to the written mode, what cannot escape notice is that writing is meant and used as a help to informal conversational traits, such as the use of abbreviations ('shd', 'acct.', 'thro', 'wd.', 'cou'd'), which

mimic conversational speed, the capitalization as a form of emphasis (ex. 3), the frequency of questions, and, especially in this case, the embedding of the characters' exclamations.

In a letter to Hester Mulso dealing with a similar topic – the plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* and a possible unhappy ending – Richardson sketches different scenarios and he does so by increasing aspects of face-to-face interaction:

June 20, 1752

[4] My dear Miss Mulso, 'won't I let you know when Harriet is married?' And you really expect no back-stroke of fortune? All to be halcyon to the end of chapter? Think you not that Harriet can shine by her behaviour in some very deep distress? – Would you, if the thing be ever published, have people be inquiring which is sir Charles Grandison's house in St. James's Square? and so forth? Poor Sir Charles Grandison! Would it not be right to remove him? – But shall we first marry him? – Shall we shew Harriet, after a departure glorious to the hero, in her vidual glory?... There, my Miss Mulso!—And the work to be published piecemeal!—What a surprise would this great catastrophe occasion! (Carroll 1964, 215-216)

Apparently he writes as he would talk, and markers of interactive-involved discourse are all present (Biber 1988): address terms, especially the second person pronouns, the use of the inclusive *we* so as to establish a sense of cooperation and an ideological bond with the recipient, temporal and spatial deixis related to the time and space both of the addressee and of the fictional characters, in other parts of the letter the imperative construction, but especially questions and exclamations, an add-on strategy typical of spoken language.

### 3.2 *Sarah Westcomb: October 1750 - January 1751*

The pragmatic, communicative function of the letter can be compared to other forms of interaction, and I agree with Fitzmaurice who points out that 'although the letter is patently not conversation on paper, epistolary discourse does imitate some of the conversation's characteristics' (Fitzmaurice 2002, 233): like conversation, for example, the letter determines the obligation to reply (the lack of a reply acquiring a value analogous to silence). Nevertheless, considering that the specific medium of this text type remains writing, many of the features defined as oral should be regarded as interactive (Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008).

Given this double nature of letters, as a genre embedding both writing- and oral-centred traits, Richardson's correspondence displays a wide range of interesting linguistic choices. The syntax of his letters is generally made up of a heavy hypotactic structure, very long sentences, a disjointed relationship between the verb and the subject of the action, to the point of making the reader forget who the agent of the utterance is. In this context, however, the letters to female correspondents show great differences in register, and Richardson tends to shift to significant oral forms – and the women also seem to do this with him.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the addressees' replies vary in style: parameters of age and power relationship seem to affect the reciprocal styles. While correspondents of the same age as Richardson, like Mrs. Donnellan, or Mrs. Delany insist on a formal tone, the younger ones tend to align theirs to more informal conversational traits.

Richardson's correspondence with Sarah Westcomb provides a peculiar example. Unlike most of Richardson's female correspondents, Miss Westcomb was not a bluestocking, and the subjects and style of her letters are ordinary and domestic as well as repetitious and trivial.<sup>19</sup>

Richardson seems very fond of her, 'in spite of or because of her utter lack of intellectual pretensions' (Eaves and Kimpel 1971, 199) and this suggests precise power roles in a relationship where he is addressed as the 'dear Papa' and she as 'my ever-amiable daughter'. The five letters exchanged between October 1750 and January 1751 (see Tab.1) are a masterpiece of interaction, of conversation in writing, especially because the major subject concerns a quarrel between the two about Sarah's supposed negligence towards 'her Papa' while on holiday, visiting a Mrs. Jodrell at Ankerwyke (Barbauld 2011, III, 281-310): in Richardson's world this meant she had not written any letters or notes for a few days, as she admits ingenuously:

Enfield, October 15, 1750

The only reason my dear papa has not yet heard from me is, that I have been returned from Ankerwyke but a few days, my mamma's amended health after my leaving her permitting my long absence; and while from home I had not leisure to write. (Barbauld 2011, 281)

OUT LETTERS	IN LETTERS	LOCATION
March 6 1746-47		B III 239-243
No date		B III 243-249
No date		B III 250- 255
	Enfield, June 27 1750	B III 256-261
London, July 2 1750		B III 261-270
	Enfield, July 27 1750	B III 271-275
August 6 1750		B III 275-281
	Enfield, Oct 15 1750	B III 281-285
Nov 1 1750		B III 285-293
	Enfield, Nov 23 1750	B III 294-298
London, Dec 5 1750		B III 298-305
	Jan 25 1750-51	B III 306-310
No date B III 311-319		B III 311-319
	Enfield, June 15 1754	B III 320- 321
London, Oct 22 1754		B III 322-323
	Kentchurch, Aug 1757 (signs as S. Scudamore)	B III 324-327
September 12, 1757		B III 328-329
	Kentchurch, Mar 12, 1758 (signs as S. Scuda-more)	B III 330-332

Tab. 1 - Correspondence of Mr. Richardson with Miss Sarah Westcomb in Barbauld's edition

Opening and closing formulae are an important clue to the nature of the relationship between sender and addressee (Tieken-Boon 2009).<sup>20</sup> In my case study the variations of the remarks introducing the address correlate with the degree of informality between Richardson and Sarah (see Tab. 2), and closing salutations are used to add new issues to the quarrel offering an interesting interplay of mitigating and non-mitigating disagreement strategies:

Place and time	Addresser > addressee	Opening Formulae	Closing Formulae
Enfield Oct 15 1750	W > R	... my dear papa	... and am, with all sincerity and regard, Your very affectionate and obliged S. Westcomb
Nov 1 1750 Enfield	R > W	-----	... and believe me to be, My half, my almost- half, good girl, Your truly affectionate and Faithful humble ser-vant, S. Richardson
Nov 23 1750 London	W > R	-----	... you should at last censure the head, than the heart, of, dear papa, Your still very affectionate, yet hardly-treated, S. Westcomb
Dec 5 1750	R > W	... my dear Miss Westcomb	... or else you will add a concern to my heart, greater than even any you could give or have given to it by your neglects of, My dear Miss Westcomb, Your truly paternal friend, S. Richard-son
Jan 25 1750-51	W > R	Dear Sir	All that I now beg is, that you'd be assured that you can never be, intentionally, neglected or slighted by, good Sir, Your affectionate and filial friend, and obliged humble servant, S. Westcomb

Tab. 2 - Opening and closing formulae Richardson/Westcomb Oct. 1750-Jan. 1751

When the quarrel begins, Richardson seems to increase the *interpersonal involvement strategies* of the addressee and of her discourse, and the second-person pronouns used to appeal to the addressee are higher in frequency than first-person pronouns (ex. 5). The addressee's countermove results in her standing back from the accusations and in deploying *ego-involvement strategies*, a long sequence of sentences whose subject is only the speaker: 'I sat down pretty easy', 'I thought indeed...', 'I ought to have wrote', 'I sent a letter', 'I have been so much vexed', 'I own I was very unwilling to answer', but concluding with the classic metaphor of ink and poison: the emphatic imperative calls the addressee back ('Do, pray Sir, send me...') only to lead to a final if unexpected insult from the 'condescending' Sarah Westcomb! (ex. 5a)

Nov. 1, 1750

[5] ... *You* know, my dear, how ready I held myself to attend *you* to Ankerwyke: *you* know what a piece of self-denial I gave myself, and what a regret *your* mamma Richardson, to consent to part with *you*, for *your* own satisfaction and pleasure, days before *you* would have left us. And, on this occasion, I could almost remind *you* what a painful child *you* were to me the Saturday preceding, by *your* pretty volatility and heedlessness. (Barbauld 2011, 286)

Nov. 23, 1750

[5a] But patience will hold no longer: my vexation rises to my pen; and, for relief, must throw itself off this way. I have heard of dipping one's pen in gall: O that I had a little gall by me now, instead of harmless ink! Do, pray Sir, send me some against next time; as you have, I believe, to spare. (Barbauld 2011, 295)

In another letter written by Richardson, the conventional signs of writing give way to a dialogic mode which includes the addressee within the sender's message. Features of natural conversation increase both in the form of hedges or pragmatic particles such as 'you know', 'I mean', or in the form of speech acts such as direct appeals to his recipient, long lists of questions, at times rhetorical (ex. 6), answers to questions. Entire paragraphs copied from the letters of his correspondents are inserted into his epistle so that they can be debated and contradicted as in a face-to-face conversation (ex. 7).

[6] ... You are not in fault at all!—Not you!—Let me put a few questions to you? Don't you think I love you dearly? With a truly paternal love? You know I do, you answer. Yes, my dear, all that know me know I do. And don't you know how solicitous I was to make an opportunity to attend you at Ankerwyke? And had you not opportunity to write when Mrs. Jodrell retired to write? When Miss Johnson retired to write to her papa?—Will you say no? Did not the former good lady remind you that you should? My concern at your slight has made me inquisitive, I can tell you that. And what then could you want by inclination? (Barbauld 2011, 299)

[7] ... But behold! (Some comfort though slighted!) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty, come a letter dated the day before from Enfield, to acquaint me, *'that the only reason that a certain person's dear papa (I say, dear papa!) had not heard from her, was, that she was but a few days before returned from Ankerwyke!'*—The very reason, in short, that he should have heard of her, and the rather, because she promised by word of mouth, as well as by written note, that he should!—And a further reason urged, that of her mamma's amended health! Astonishing! [...] Yet still, you say, *all was charming, catch or not catch!—for now-and-then, for change, you took a breakfast at Sunning-Hill, and a dance too!'*—I heard of you from that place! I did so!—*'Returned more gay (and more forgetful of course!) than you went!'* (How could either papa or promise be remembered, thus gaily diverted?) *Especially when to these amusements, these charming amusements, succeeded converse, music, working,* (Did

you say working?) *reading!*—(Ay, reading!)—*And a rubber at whist* (No question!) [sic] *concluded the night.*' (Barbauld 2011, 289-290; my emphasis)

[8] ... I am accused of playing off a sheet full of witticism (Witticism, Miss W.! Very reverent indeed!), which you, poor girl, can't tell what to do with. Very well, Miss W. But I did not expect—But no matter—What have I done with my handkerchief? I—I—I did not expect—But no matter, Miss W. (Barbauld 2011, 303)

In spite of a partial reported speech, the words of the correspondent literally merge with those of the writer, sometimes preceded and followed by inverted commas, the fragile sign of a tagged direct speech, which is then transformed into indirect speech by the syntax of the verb. In this way, by engaging the physical, literal presence of the 'you' which is necessary in the epistolary form, Richardson innovates and exalts procedures which were conventional in the period.

Moreover, the emphasis on word order, lexical selection, broken and unfinished sentences, elimination of verbs, repetition of words (as if mimicking a stuttering voice!), exclamation marks and dashes adds a major contribution to stress the oral quality of the text. Parenthetical comments are frequently used to counterpoint the excerpts quoted (ex. 7 and 8), and 'their paratactic possibilities suit the spontaneous nature of spoken language where speakers tend to add on ideas to whatever they happen to be saying at that particular moment' (Brownlees 2005, 74).

### 3.3 *Lady Bradshaigh: the Perlocutionary Force of a Letter*

My last example of the ways in which Richardson exploits the involving potential of the epistolary form reaches out to the perlocutionary effect produced upon his addressee (Austin 1962).

The influence of Richardson's letters on his correspondents, both on the linguistic level and the register level, can only be confirmed and increased, if we think that his recipients were also his readers, enabled and entitled to correspond only after a close, and often addictive, reading of Richardson's novels, or again, of the letters in his novels. The writing-to-the-moment technique is well known with its specific linguistic kit, together with features of pathetic enunciation (Altman 1982). Clarissa's letters provide numerous examples of this style: the writer's emotion fills the page, it is not narrated but staged, visualized on the page, as in the *Mad Papers*. It is not only a story of tragic events, but also a linguistic representation of passions, which affects the reader to the point of determining a reaction conveyed precisely by the deeply interactive nature of a letter.<sup>21</sup>

Let us read an excerpt from lady Dorothy Bradshaigh's letter of January 1749. Lady Bradshaigh – 'Belfour', at the time this letter was written – was certainly Richardson's most prolific correspondent and probably his favourite.

She had read the first volumes of *Clarissa* and had engaged in a desperate epistolary exchange to avoid Clarissa's death. She had finally promised to read to the end of the book and write her opinions on it in a letter to the author.

Jan. 11, 1749

I verily believe I have shed a pint of tears and my heart is still bursting, tho' they cease not to flow at this moment, nor will, I fear, for some time... When alone in agonies would I lay down the Book, take it up again, walk about the Room, let fall a Flood of Tears, wipe my Eyes, read again, perhaps not three Lines, throw away the Book crying out excuse me good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on. It is your Fault you have done more than I can bear... I threw myself upon my Couch to compose, recollecting my promise (which a thousand times I wished had not been made) again I read, again acted the same Part. Sometimes agreeably interrupted by my dear [husband], who was at that Time labouring through the Sixth Volume with a Heart capable of Impressions equal to my own, tho' the effects shewn in a more justifiable Manner, which I believe may be compared to what Mr. Belford felt when he found the beauteous Sufferer in her Prison Room. 'Something rose in my throat, I know not what; which made me gurgle as it were for Speech' – Seeing me so moved, he begged for God's sake I would read no more, kindly threatened to take the book from me, but upon my pleading my promise, suffered me to go on. That Promise is now fulfilled, and I am thankful the heavy Task is over, tho' the effects are not... My Spirits are strangely seized, my sleep is disturbed, waking in the Night I burst into a Passion of crying, so I did at Breakfast this Morning, and Just now again. God be merciful to me, what can it mean?... I must lock up such a History from my Sight. (Barbauld 2011, IV, 240-242)

In this case the addressee is not replying by commenting on the actual words of the characters: she reads and cries: 'I read again', she says, 'perhaps not three Lines, and throw away the Book'; then reads and walks 'about the Room'. The emotional language as recorded in the letter of the heroine is transmitted directly to the (female) reader, who is moved to act, often *like* the character, either Clarissa or Mr. Belford. Here, and in many other examples, the letter employs the emphasis on word order and presents a certain lexical selection, but also a special focus on prosodic and paralinguistic coding of emotions in language, as well as a kind of physiology of the emotions, such as trembling hands, or insomnia, all instances of a pathemic dimension.<sup>22</sup> In an exemplary lesson on 'how to do things with words', all the actions described by the writer are presented as a direct effect of reading, 'the heavy Task' mentioned by Lady Bradshaigh. The letter literally gets the addressee to do certain actions, precisely those perlocutionary 'effects which are not over'.<sup>23</sup>

With this final example, the interpersonal involvement strategies practised by Richardson in his letter writing seem to reach out and capture the recipient even in her/his extratextual world, only to bring her/him back within the epistolary text, which is the space and the time where the linguistic event takes place.

#### 4. *Conclusions*

Richardson's and his correspondents' personal letters may be considered and studied as a peculiar repertoire in the vast corpus of eighteenth-century personal correspondence. The homogeneous literacy of the participants and a certain constant intimacy of the writer-addressee relationship, which may vary only according to parameters of gender and age, are the most relevant features of his network clusters. In addition to a qualitative analysis, a quantitative approach would be needed to reconsider and further investigate the sociolinguistic features of this correspondence, such as factors related to region or to class differences, or to male-female linguistic variables.

With the data I had at my disposal, I started with the writer variables which are more easily identifiable considering the relevance and the public standing of a figure such as Samuel Richardson's. In the face of writers and topics which might entail a formal tone, the register of Richardson's letters seems rather to veer towards informal and face-to-face conversational traits, as if the celebrated writing-to-the-moment style was meant not only as a lesson in fictional writing, but also as a reference style for the various topics and functions of a familiar letter. Thus, both the discussion of narrative worlds and an everyday argument appear to be treated with similar linguistic strategies.

Each of the three examples presented may be approached and expanded from other perspectives, but what may be read as a dominant trait in Richardson's personal letters is the special focus on the interlocutor, the deliberate effort to make his discourse extremely persuasive, and the constant display of a conative function which may also achieve perlocutionary effects. These aspects are accompanied by a set of linguistic and pragmatic involvement features all aimed at including, even graphically embedding, the addressee (with)in the writer's discourse and writing, in a rhetorical, as well as a physical way. The result is a form of epistolary communication which tends to fill in the canonical gap of distance and absence of the addressee, and through a constant double-voiced exchange, to produce the illusion of a dialogue within a monologue. Nothing else but the quintessence of a letter.

#### *Appendix*

[1748]

To Edward Moore

You have done me great Honour, and given me great Pleasure, by yours of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and I should have acknowledged the Favour sooner, had I not been a good deal indisposed, and had I not quarrell'd with my Pen [and ink]. Indeed we are hardly Friends yet. But I thought myself oblig'd in Gratitude to you to make the first Advances to the sullen Implement.

Methinks I would be above justifying a Fault merely because it is past & ir-retrievable. But have not I dealt in Death & Terrors? Was it not time I shd. hasten to

an end of my tedious Work? Was not Story, Story, Story the continual demand upon me? I did not desire that the *Reader* sh'd pity Lovelace: But I w'd not punish more than was necessary in his *person*, a poor Wretch whom I had tortured in Conscience (the punishment I always chose for my punishable characters).

You say, Sir, that 'Lovelace shd have given Belford an acct. of his own Remorses after the Duel, or, if that had been improper Morden might have visited him privately, and have written the acct. himself.' Run thro' the Body, delirious, vomiting Blood, the first was impossible: To the second I answer – Morden was wounded himself – They fought in the Austrian dominion: It was concerted that the survivor to avoid public animadversions shd. make off to the Venetian territories. de la Tour had actually some trouble from the magistrates on acct. of the Duel, tho' not the principal; and the principal out of their reach – But suppose it had *not* been so – To whom must Morden have written? – To Belford? – expatiating upon the Death of *his* intimate Friend? – Would it have been natural for Morden to have done this? – He was too brave to insult over the fallen man- Must he have regretted the Action and pitied him? – Would that have been right? Would not that have engaged for the unhappy man general pity, which I was solicitous to prevent? – Had Morden written (to whomsoever) he must in modesty have been brief – could not possibly have expatiated or triumphed. While every praise of Morden from a servant of Lovelace was praise indeed to Morden; and every half hint of the disadvantage of Lovelace a whole one.

You wish, Sir, that 'this acct. had been given by any but a Servant.' Shall we suppose that Mowbray or Tourville had been sent abroad with him (Belford was too much engaged) Mowbray wd. have given a Brutal or Farcical acct., if I had respected his Character, as he did of Lovelace's delirious behaviour on the first communication of Clarissa's death- and if we judge by his behaviour in the Interview between Col. Morden & Lovelace at Lord M.'s, he cou'd not have been a patient spectator of the Exit of a Man of whose skill & courage he had so high an opinion and whom he professed to love: having also had high words with the Col: which Lord M's mediation prevented at the time going further – Tourville was a Coxcomb, and had besides Mowbray's partialities in Lovelace's favour – who then but a Servant cou'd give this acct? and was not de la Tour intrusted with the whole Management and Knowledge of the affair? Was he not a Servant who had travelled with him before? A Servant whom he calls an ingenious and trusty fellow, and with whom he leaves all his orders in Case he shd. fall?

'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' – I have a few things to offer on this head, after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in Letter CXI *a very few days before* the Duel, that there cou'd not be a necessity for any persons giving an acct. of them after in was fought. I have shewn that there cou'd hardly *naturally* be *any* body by whom an acct. of the Duel cou'd be given, and of the behaviour of the two Gentlemen in it, but de la Tour, Lovelace's travelling valet. And if this be allowed me, let us observe whether that acct: be not given in *Character*, and tho' very brief, with circumstances of *great Terror*, if duly attended to, and which carry in them the marks of *Signal* and *exemplary* punishment- Did not Lovelace *wish to leave tho' triumphed over*? Was Clarissa so mean? Did she wish for life after the infamous outrage? Indeed I was afraid that Lovelace wd. have been thot. too mean in such his wishes after Morden had conquered him, by a skill superior to that on which he had valued himself. I have made Belford say, 'that he

is confident that Col: Morden wd. not take his life at Lovelace's hand.' – Now what are Lovelace's words on receiving the mortal wound – 'The *Luck* is yours Sir' – tho his characteristic pride makes him call it *Luck*, here is a Superiority acknowledged – again when the Col: takes leave of him – 'You have well revenged the dear Creature!' – 'I have Sir says the heroic Col: and perhaps shall be sorry & c.' – again the proud Lovelace yet succumbing, 'There is a fate in it – a *cursed fate* (see the Regret) or this had not been.' Then more explicitly he acknowledged (the however not ungenerously acknowledged) inferiority. – 'But be ye all witnesses that I have provoked my Destiny and own that I fall by a man of Honour.' – Now behold the visible superiority in the Cols: behaviour as related by de la Tour. – 'Sir, I believe you have enough' – this said on giving the first wound, behold Morden throwing down his own sword, and running to Lovelace, 'Ah Monsieur cries the hero, you are a dead man – Call to God for Mercy!' See Morden represented by this servant of Lovelace's 'as cool as if nothing so extraordinary had happened, and assisting the surgeons, tho his own wound bled much,' and not suffering that to be dressed till he saw Lovelace put in to the voiture – giving a purse of gold to Lovelace's Servant to pay the Surgeons, and to reward that Servant for his Care of his dying Master, and see him also bountiful to the very foot-man of Mr. Lovelace – What Circumstances of noble & generous triumph all there! – And over whom? – over the proud and doubly mortified Lovelace – 'Snatch these few fleeting Moments and commend yourself to God' – What further generosity in these Words! Then for Lovelace's Remorses, even as represented by his Servant at the moment he recd. His Death's Wound (convinced that it *was* his death's wound), 'O my Beloved Clarissa, says he, now art thou – inwardly speaking three or four words more' (his sword dropping from his hand, his Victor hastening to support him) was not this more expressive than if those three or four words had been given? – Then may it not be seen that I have introduced a Ghost to terrify the departing Lovelace, tho' I had not intended any body but Lovelace shou'd see it – Take her away! – Take her away! But named nobody says de la Tour. – I leave it to the Reader to suppose it the ghost of Miss Betterton, of his French Countess, or of whom he pleases, or to attribute it to his delirium for the sake of . . . . & probability. – Hear Lovelace's *further remorses* in de la Tour's acct: – 'And sometimes says the honest valet, praised some Lady (that Clarissa I suppose, whom he called upon when he recived his death's wound) calling her sweet Excellence! Divine Creature! Fair Sufferer! – And once he said – Look down Blessed Spirit, look down, – and there stopt his Lips however moving!' – What a Goddess does he make of the exalted Clarissa! – Yet how deplorably impious, hardly thinks of invoking the highest assistance and mercy! –

Now for his *Sufferings* – 'the first wound followed by a great effusion of Blood' – After the mortal Wound, see him represented as 'fainting away two or three times running and vomiting blood' – '– See him supposed speechless, and struggling against his Fate, at times, in these words. – The Col: was concerned that my chevalier was between whiles (and when he *could* speak & struggle) *extremely outrageous*.' Is not this a strong contrast to the death of Clarissa? 'Poor Gentleman!' adds the pitying valet, behold Lovelace tho object of his own servant's pity! 'Poor Gentleman he had made quite sure of victory!' – again – 'He little thought, poor Gentleman, his end was so near!'

But further as to his sufferings, – See the Voiture tho' moving slowly, by its motion getting his wounds bleeding afresh; and again, with difficulty stopt. See him giving Directions afterwards for his last devoir to his Friend Belford. See him, con-

trary to all expectation, as de la Tour says, living over the night, but suffering much, as well for his Impatience and *Disappointment* as from his *Wounds*. – for, adds the honest valet, ‘He seemed very unwilling to Die.’ – What a further contrast this to the last Behaviour of the divine Clarissa! – See him in his following Delirium Spectres before his eyes! His lips moving, tho’ speechless – *wanting* therefore to speak – ‘See him in convulsions, and fainting away at nine in the morning.’ A Quarter of an hour in them; yet recovering to more Terror. The *Ultimate Composure* mentioned by de la Tour, rather mentioned to comfort his surviving Friends than appearing to have reason to suppose it to be so, from his subsequent description of his last Agonies. *Blessed*, his word – interrupted by another strong Convulsion – *Blessed*, again repeated, when he recovered from it rather to shew the Reader that he felt, than that he was so *Ultimately Composed*. ‘Then *seeming* ejaculation, – then speaking inwardly but so as not to be understood’ – how affecting such a circumstance in such a Man! And at last with his wonted haughtiness of spirit – *LET THIS EXPIATE* all his apparent Invocation and address to the *SUPREME*. Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit, with respect to the Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace! – I protest I have been unable to reperse the acct: of his Death *with this great Circumstance* in my Head, and to think of the triumphant one of my divine Clarissa, without pity – and I did hope that the contrast if attentively considered would be very striking.



Samuel Richardson by Joseph Constantine Stadler, published by Sir Richard Phillips, after Susanna Duncombe (née Highmore) coloured aquatint, published 31 May 1804 NPG D5810. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

<sup>1</sup> The present article is part of an ongoing research project on Richardson's social networks with particular focus on his female correspondents: Its aim is to provide an initial and provisional step towards investigating potential linguistic and stylistic changes as an effect of communal correspondence in Samuel Richardson's circles. The compilation of a database of Richardson's correspondents' letters is currently in progress.

<sup>2</sup> 'Out-letters' from Richardson to his correspondents, and 'in-letters', the letters addressed to him (Baker 1980).

<sup>3</sup> The complete collection was published in 1943 on the bicentenary anniversary of Cheyne's death (Mullett 1943).

<sup>4</sup> The famous *Biography* by T.C. Duncan Eaves and B.D. Kimpel (1971) contains a valuable Appendix in which there is a list of the dates and collocations of most of the letters which still exist.

<sup>5</sup> In the manuscripts there are lines and phrases in green ink written by Barbauld to distinguish them from those written by Richardson himself. In the letter from Aaron Hill to Richardson dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 1741, there is evidence of three writers, besides Barbauld; there is Hill's calligraphy, the date is written by one of Richardson's copyists and a note, which was then crossed out, was written by Richardson himself (McCarty 2001; Sabor 1989). In 2011 Cambridge University Press published a reprint of Barbauld's collection.

<sup>6</sup> In 2009, I edited and translated into Italian a selection of Richardson's letters on the composition of *Clarissa* (Montini 2009).

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Susan Fitzmaurice, Anni Sairio, and Ingrid Tieken-Boon very warmly for their encouragement and their quick and friendly answers and involvement in my attempt to find any compiled electronic resource or database where Richardson's correspondents' letters were included. My thanks also go to the two anonymous readers of the present article for their suggestions and corrections.

<sup>8</sup> The first two volumes have been recently published. They include Richardson's correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill family (Gerrard, ed., 2013), and his correspondence with Dr. George Cheyne and Thomas Edwards (Shuttleton and Dussinger, eds, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Following a quantitative approach, 'density, multiplexity and the strength of ties are the most common categories used to characterise network structure' (Sairio 2008b, 2-3).

<sup>10</sup> For biographical information on Richardson's correspondents I rely on the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Carroll 1964 and Eaves and Kimpel 1971.

<sup>11</sup> 'There is', writes Thomas Edwards to Richardson on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1751, 'and I doubt not but that you have felt it, there is something more deliciously charming in the approbation of the ladies than in that of a whole university of he-critics' (Barbauld 2011, III, 18).

<sup>12</sup> By 'epistolary literacy' Whyman means 'a dynamic set of practices that involves letter writing, reading, interpretation, and response by networks of individuals with shared conventions and norms' (Whyman 2007, 578).

<sup>13</sup> 'My Father was a very honest Man, descended of a Family of middling Note in ye County of Surry'; to Johannes Stinstra (Carroll 1964, 228-235).

<sup>14</sup> Richardson seems to interpret what in socio-linguistic terms is defined 'styleshift', represented, for example, by the language of women or of upwardly mobile social classes. One characteristic of styleshift is the extreme attention paid to grammatical correctness and a famous example of hyper-correct linguistic behaviour is provided by James Boswell, whose linguistic insecurity as a Scotsman in London led him to fall back on Johnson's style (Tieken-Boon 1991).

<sup>15</sup> According to Tieken-Boon a linguistic-grammatical aspect present in Richardson's prose and considered influential is the use of *do* as an auxiliary: he seems to make an archaic use of it, much more so than any other authors of the same period, and also in his private letters in which the register remains very formal. There is also an abundance of negatives without *do*, both in his informative prose and his letters and in his use of direct speech. As far as lexicon is concerned, Johnson embedded in his *Dictionary* a large number of examples taken from 'A

Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments', a collection begun by Richardson's friend Salomon Lowe, finished by the novelist himself and appended to the fourth edition of *Clarissa* (1751) (Keast 1957, 436). Tiekens-Boon also maintains the presence of Richardson's influence on another cluster with Sarah Fielding and her friend Jane Collier, in this case with an effect on capitalization in her letters and in her spelling in general (Tiekens-Boon 2009).

<sup>16</sup>Edward Moore (1721-1757) was a dramatist. He was the author of *Fables of the Female Sex* (1744), *The Trial of Selim the Persian* (1748), *The Foundling* (1748) and *Gil Blas* (1751).

<sup>17</sup>Richardson's strategy to lure his readers and correspondents into a cooperation on his plots, only to reaffirm his power as author is well known: 'though he said that he depended on readers for inspiration, few of their suggestions were incorporated' (Whyman 2007, 583). As Johnson put it in a letter (28 March 1754) to him: 'You have a trick of laying yourself open to objections, in the first part of your work, and crushing them in subsequent parts' (Redford 1992, I, 79). See also Keymer 2000; Montini 2003.

<sup>18</sup>Following Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008, I use *register* and *register variation* as reflected by the writer-recipient relationship, and in this sense linked to what they also call *style*.

<sup>19</sup>Sarah Westcomb (Barbauld uses two spellings 'Wetscombe' and 'Westcomb', but in the original Forster manuscripts she signs her name 'Wescomb') was the daughter of Daniel Westcomb and Mary Page. Westcomb died in 1731 and his widow married James Jobson in 1736, but Jobson died four years later. Sarah lived in Enfield, north of London with her mother, who had inherited a large fortune, and with a Miss Betsy Jobson, her step-sister. Her correspondence with Richardson began in the summer of 1746, when she probably met him visiting her friends Vanderblank, the printer's landlord, at North End, Fulham. By October 1746 he was sending her the first volume of the manuscript of *Clarissa*, and by March 1747 she was 'his daughter', praising the fatherless girl's devotion to her sick mother, and soon declared his intention of directing her 'future Steps in life' precisely through *Clarissa*. After her mother's death in 1754, Sarah married John Scudamore in 1756, but remained a constant correspondent until Richardson's death (Eaves and Kimpel 1971, 198-199; Carroll 1964, 21-22).

<sup>20</sup>Baker suggests three elements in the standard closing formulae: the address ('I am, Dear friend'), the 'compliments' or 'services' ('your affectionate') and the signature (Baker 1980, 59).

<sup>21</sup>For the aesthetic, performative and pedagogical aspects of the 'sentimental' in a historical and cultural perspective, see among others Todd 1986; Mullan 1988; Gordon 2002.

<sup>22</sup>See also Susanna Higmore to Richardson, January 2, 1749, *Forster Collection* XV, ii.f.12 Victoria and Albert Museum; John Duncombe to Richardson October 15, 1751 (*Barbauld* II, 272); Thomas Edwards to Richardson January 15, 1755 (*Barbauld* III, 112).

<sup>23</sup>On the 'social response' to Richardson's fictional characters see Greenstein 1980; Montini 2003.

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# Angles of Refraction: The Letters of Mary Delany

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## *Abstract*

Mary Delany (1700-1788) is particularly famous for her paper-cuttings or ‘mosaicks’ based on botanical subjects. A very lively woman of fashion, she was close to Queen Charlotte and one of the Bluestocking Ladies. She left a vivid portrait of life and society in eighteenth century England and Ireland in the six volumes of her *Autobiography and Letters*, edited in 1861 by her descendant Lady Llanover. Her autobiography is made up of 18 letters sent to her most intimate friend, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Portland. The first letter is dated 1740, but in this, as in the following ones, Mrs. Delany narrates her past life to her friend, starting from the early years of her life, describing her unhappy marriage, financial difficulties as a widow, and family relationships. Along with these ‘autobiographical’ letters, other letters written by her to her sister Ann are introduced, which date to the periods of life Mrs. Delany is dealing with. The aim of this paper is to focus on the textual, linguistic and content differences between the two letter types, and analyse how the identity of Mary Delany is differently constructed and perceived in the explicit autobiographical letters addressed to the Duchess of Portland, and the ones written to her sister.

*Keywords:* Autobiographical Letters, Familiar Letters, Identity Construction, Mary Delany

## 1. *Introductory Notes*

In her study on the familiar letter in early modern English, Susan F. Fitzmaurice states that this letter type ‘participates in the social, historical and rhetorical plasticity of the letter as a textual form’, and that ‘its many guises and functions... serve to capture (as well as manage) the multiplicity of relationships among correspondents’ (2002, 233). Brant, on the other hand, focusing on eighteenth-century letters, observes that ‘the history of letters links up with other genres’ and that ‘boundaries are not always clear’ (2006, 25). Starting from these assumptions, this article aims at analysing what happens when the genre of letter writing, in itself a form of self-presentation, is shaped by the writer to become the means of voluntary self-(re)presentation, resulting in an autobiography proper.

The analysis will be carried out on the correspondence of Mary Delany, *née* Granville (1700-1788), who was famous during her lifetime for her exquisite paper mosaics of flowers, a collection of which is in the British

Museum. A very lively woman of fashion, at different periods of her long life, Mary started writing her recollections of which two unfinished manuscripts still exist. The first one is an autobiographical fragment 'written in the latter years of her life' and 'dictated to a confidential amanuensis' (Llanover 1861, vii); the second consists of 18 letters in her handwriting addressed to her intimate friend Margaret Cavendish Harley, the Duchess of Portland. Both manuscripts were edited by her descendant, Lady Llanover, daughter of Ann Granville, Mrs. Delany's sister, and published in six volumes in 1861-1862, together with the correspondence of her aunt, as *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany: With Interesting Reminiscences of King George The Third and Queen Charlotte*.<sup>1</sup> To render 'the chain of events more complete' (Llanover 1861, viii), Lady Llanover decided to enrich Delany's biographical narrative with original letters written by relatives to Mrs. Delany and by her to her mother and sister Ann, in the same years dealt with in the autobiographical letters.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the 18 autobiographical letters addressed to the Duchess of Portland, and examine them side by side with a small corpus of 30 letters written by Mary to her sister, Ann Granville. These letters were published in the first of the six volumes edited by Lady Llanover, in 1861. The aims of the analysis are:

- to compare these two letter types – the autobiographical letter and the familiar letter – in order to check if and how the different addressees, functions, and topics, affect the textual, linguistic, rhetorical and metadiscursive features of the genre;
- to highlight how the identity of Mary Delany is constructed and conveyed in the two letter types;
- to highlight how the social background is portrayed and conveyed.

The Critical Discourse Analysis approach developed by Norman Fairclough (1992, 2001, 2003) will be applied, since the analysis of Mrs. Delany's letters will take into consideration textual, social and discursive practices.

In terms of discursive practice, all the letters belong to the category of private and personal writing and offer a good example of the ways epistolary discourse can help reconstruct a profile both of the encoder of the letters and of his/her social network. They are an interesting example of what, looking at changes in the nature of letters over the late medieval and early modern periods, Daybell considers 'the emergence of more personal epistolary forms, and the increasing range of private, introspective and flexible uses for which letters were employed' (2001, 2). As regards the editing of the letters, Lady Llanover affirms in her introduction that she has preserved the spelling and phraseology of the texts as she found them, since she wants to show the superiority of the style of Mrs. Delany 'measured by comparison with the greater part of her contemporaries in her own class', especially considering how she was separated by her noble relationships at an age 'when even in these days

the epistolary style of young ladies is generally very faulty and unformed' (Llanover 1861, viii-ix).

Before focusing on the texts, a few data about the encoder of the letters and her recipients will be provided, as they can be useful to locate them within their social context.

Mary Delany was the daughter of Bernard Granville, from a West Country Tory family. Her father's brother, George, became Lord Lansdowne, a Tory politician. The Granville fortunes fell with the Tories at Queen Anne's death in 1714. Mary lived for a while at Lord Lansdowne's house where, at the age of 17, she met his friend, Alexander Pendarves, over forty years her senior. She was forced into marriage by her family and the marriage was rather unhappy. When her husband died, she was left free but without an income. She spent some time in Ireland where she met Swift and a friend of the writer, the Irish churchman Patrick Delany. In 1741 Delany proposed marriage and Mary accepted, despite her family's opposition.

Mrs. Delany knew most of the important scientific, literary and artistic people of her time: she was acquainted with Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, who appreciated and encouraged her botanically accurate and extraordinarily beautiful representations of plants; she was a friend of Elizabeth Montagu and other members of the Bluestocking circle, of Jonathan Swift and Fanny Burney. She was also a friend of the Duchess of Portland (1715-1785), the wealthiest woman in England in her time.

One of the greatest eighteenth-century collectors, and a patron of the arts, the Duchess of Portland devoted much of her adult life to the study of natural history, and supported, and was supported by, a team of botanists, entomologists, and ornithologists. She also corresponded for ten years with Jean-Jacques Rousseau on botanical subjects (Cook 2007). It was through her friendship with the Duchess that Mary was introduced to members of the royal family who generously granted her a house in Windsor as well as an annuity of £300.

As regards Ann Granville, she was younger than her sister, but when she grew up, Mary 'had a perfect confidence in her, told her some of [her] distresses, and found great consolation and relief to [her] mind by this opening of [her] heart, and from her great tenderness and friendship for [her]' (Llanover 1861, 85). Ann married a certain Mr. Dewes, and died in 1760.

## *2. The Autobiographical Letters to Mary Cavendish Duchess of Portland*

This group of 18 letters shows how letter writing can be used as a form of 'public' exposure of the private self, and as an instrument to produce an explicitly autobiographical narrative. In an autobiography the author selects what to include and what to omit in order to create an orderly and developmental narration whose aim is to shape a 'true' image of him/herself.<sup>2</sup> Since

the objective of these letters is to outline a retrospective sketch of Delany's life, as well as of the people and events connected with the author/character, the main functions of the autobiographical letters of Delany are: narrating past events, describing people, expressing her opinion on people and facts, and explaining causes and (desired or undesired) effects of the events. All these functions are mostly enunciated through the past tense of verbs.

As was fashionable at the time (Brant 2006, 24), Mary uses fictitious names for her addressee, who is called Maria, for herself (she signs the letters as Aspasia), and for all the other people mentioned. Thus, her husband is called Gromio, Alcander is the name she gives to Lord Lansdowne, her aunt is called Valeria, and her friend Sarah Chapone is called Sappho. However, to help her friend's understanding, Mrs. Delany provided a key to the names on a separate sheet of paper. Sometimes little notes were added to provide details about people or places not known to the Duchess. Elliptical language is not possible in these letters, since the encoder and the receiver often do not share the same information.

The first autobiographical letter is dated 1740, that is the year after Mary's first encounter with the Duchess of Portland. In 1740, Mary was 40 years old, but the story she was going to narrate dated back to more than twenty years before, since her life story starts when she was 15. Letters I to IV focus on the years 1715-1717, letters V to XIV on the years 1717-1724-1725, letters XV-XVI on the years 1726-1730, and finally letters XVII-XVIII on the years 1730-1733.

Mrs. Delany is writing her letters, then, on the basis of her memory, recollecting her past life looking at it from a distant point of view, from a perspective that already knows how things developed and what consequences they produced. She also writes out of a grown-up awareness of herself, and with an experience of the world that has equipped her to give opinions and comments on people and facts. Although there are no references to the present state of the author nor to the moment of enunciation, apart from the references to the addressee (who lives in the present time), sometimes during the narration, the author comments on how she feels today in remembering her past life, as in the following passage: 'I passed two months with dreadful apprehensions, apprehensions too well grounded. I assure you the recollection of this part of my life *makes me tremble at this day*' (Llanover 1861, 24; emphasis mine). Only in these rare cases, is the past 'relative to the discursive present of epistolary communication' (Dossena and Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012, 5).

Although written in a formal style, the letters allow Mrs. Delany to express an emotive content. She gives, thus, a detailed account of her own feelings and discloses her intimate thoughts and attitudes to her friend, as can be seen in the following description of her reaction to Mr. Pendarves' proposal of marriage:

How can I describe to you, my dear friend, the cruel agitation of my mind! Whilst my uncle talked to me, I did not once interrupt him, surprise, tender concern for my father, a consciousness of my own little merit, and the great abhorrence I had to Gromio, raised such a confusion of thoughts in my mind, that it deprived me of the power of utterance, and after some moments' silence I burst into tears. (Llanover 1861, 27)

She narrates how her unhappy marriage with Mr. Pendarves was arranged by her uncle for political reasons; she also narrates about her uneasy and retired life as the wife of an elderly husband; about the death of her husband, as well as her financial difficulties as a young widow, and her sentimental life during the first years of her widowhood.

The opening paragraph of the first letter states that it was her friend who convinced her to begin the autobiographical narration which is presented as a task to perform: 'The task you have set me, my dearest Maria, is a very hard one, and nothing but the complying with the earnest request from so tender a friend, could prevail with me to undertake it' (Llanover 1861, 7).

The important role played by Margaret as stimulus of the autobiography will be recalled now and then in the opening lines of the letters, where Mary humorously portrays an interchangeable relationship of victim and tormentor, as indicated by recurring keywords such as 'punishment', 'sufferer', 'obstinacy', 'obedience', as in 'I am very sorry I can't prevail with you to let me be silent; *you* will be the sufferer, but since you are obstinate, you deserve the punishment' (Llanover 1861, 12; her emphasis); or in 'Let your own obstinacy, my dear friend, be your punishment, and since you insist on my finishing this little history I will not spare your patience but put it to the utmost trial, by recollecting as many particulars as my memory will permit' (Llanover 1861, 50); and also in 'Why should you, my dear Maria, insist on my going on with my narrative; it will hardly afford you entertainment enough to compensate for the loss of time in reading it, I will convince you of it by my obedience' (Llanover 1861, 296).

Although there is no explicit mention of replies from the Duchess, she is presented in the narrative as an active participant who elicits extra information. This would imply an (epistolary? vis-à-vis?) exchange between the writer and her reader. 'You say I have omitted giving you his character, 'tis true I have not been very particular in it', Mary writes in Letter VI, filling then many pages with the description of her husband's aspect and character (Llanover 1861, 34-35).

The I/You relationship which is a basic trait of epistolary discourse, and is 'both a form of self-(re)presentation and of dialogic interaction' (Dossena and Del LungoCamiciotti 2012, 4), and is present in Mary's direct address to the Duchess, underlines how, although Mary is reconstructing her life and an image of herself, these letters cannot be considered a diary (Bland and Cross 2004, 7).

Mary often anticipates her recipient's likely thoughts and reactions, as in the following passages, where she accentuates both her sincere mind in retelling her own story and her deep friendship with Margaret:

I am sure my dear generous Maria must condemn me, and have a very bad opinion of my nature, that could so obstinate repel all sense of affection for one [her husband] so fond of me, but I flatter myself it was not in my power to make a suitable return, or if it had, I promise not to disguise any part of my conduct or even my sentiments from you; and I will rather run the hazard of losing some part of your good opinion, than hide myself from you, under the veil of any kind of deceit. (Llanover 1861, 56)

And this I think is a very proper period to my little history, which I fear has not given you the entertainment and satisfaction you expected from it. If it has failed in those particulars, I hope it will at least convince you of the great confidence I have in your friendship... (Llanover 1861, 242)

Thus, these letters are connoted as a space where the writer can express her opinions directly and sincerely, even risking a negative judgment on the part of the recipient. At the same time, the author is also constructing an image of the receiver, who is valued as a person worthy of nothing but the truth. The letters therefore present the relationship of the two friends as one built on more valuable features than the eighteenth-century ideals of politeness and agreeability. In other cases, the writer tries to win her friend's sympathy, appealing to her good nature, as in: 'I shall not disguise my thoughts, or soften any part of my behaviour, which I fear was not altogether justifiable, and which, though your judgment may condemn, your indulgence and partiality I hope will find some excuse for' (Llanover 1861, 28).

As concerns the structure, the autobiographical letters do not start with opening formulae. They usually resume the thread of the narrative where it has been interrupted and the salutation is often inside the first paragraph. The closing lines underline the need to interrupt the narration because of the excessive length of the letter as in: 'These were the scenes I had at home: it is now time to tell you what I met with abroad, which I must make the subject of another letter, this being already of unreasonable length' (Llanover 1861, 63); or for lack of energy on the part of the writer as in 'I was then to enter a new scene of life, and must (before I lay it open to your view) beg leave to take breath' (Llanover 1861, 57); or for supposed physical or emotional tiredness on the part of the reader as in 'I ought to relieve you after telling you so melancholy a story' (Llanover 1861, 54). The subscription, when present, follows the norms of etiquette (Bannet 2005, 66), showing that Mary felt on equal terms with the Duchess, as in '... my friend, adieu' (Llanover 1861, 16), 'Adieu, my dear Maria' (Llanover 1861, 54).

The metadiscursive features refer to the letter Mrs. Delany is writing and to previous ones as in 'I told you in one of my first letters that she was very

handsome and gay, she loved admiration...’ (Llanover 1861, 81). In this way, the letters are connected to one other, thus reinforcing the cohesiveness of the narration. Other people’s epistles, usually sent to her by unwanted suitors, are also reported. These references allow us to observe the discursive practices of the eighteenth-century world of letter writing:

... my servant brought me a letter: I opened it; guess at my vexation when I found it came from Clario! It was written in French with the true spirit of a libertine Frenchman. In it he deplored my unhappy situation in being nurse to an old man... To this effect was his elaborate billet composed, and stuffed with high-flown compliments to me, all which I despised as much as I detested the author... I bid them tell the servant ‘the letter required no answer’. (Llanover 1861, 94)

As is expected in an autobiography, the letters follow a narrative in chronological order which has a main plot – Mary’s own life story – and digressions on minor characters. Because of the events narrated and the ‘characters’ described, these letters cannot but remind us of eighteenth-century epistolary sentimental novels. It is an interesting coincidence that *Pamela* (1740) was published the same year Mrs. Delany started her autobiography in letters. It is difficult to say what influence epistolary novels might have had on Mary’s autobiographical letter writing, and also difficult to ascertain whether there is a connection. Mary’s letters have indeed the plot of a novel, where Mary herself can be read as a character, with the full array of the forced marriage with the elderly husband, of the wife who has to face the world unprotected, guarded only by her own moral code, devoid of friends she can disclose her soul to. In the plot there is also space for a few dissolute rakes, such as the above mentioned Clario, and Germanico whose ambush in Windsor Park has the flavour of a literary device:

I soon apprehended this was the plot of the audacious wretch’s contrivance, and a thousand fears crowded my mind... He came up to me and threw himself upon his knees, holding my petticoat, and begged I would forgive the stratagem he had made use of, for an opportunity of declaring how miserable he was on my account. I grew so frightened and so angry, that I hardly heard what he said, nor can I exactly recollect what I said to him, in the vast confusion I was in... (Llanover 1861, 90)

We cannot, however, question the authenticity of her letters as documents and vehicles of the sincere expression of her heart, because of the presence of the Duchess of Portland as real recipient of Mary’s confidential writing, and because Mary is well aware of the goals of her letters. Epistolary fiction, on the contrary, ‘depends on the pretence that the reader is the unintended audience, that there has been some mistakes in the communication process, that the writer is doing something he doesn’t know he is doing’ (Gillis 1984, 85).

As concerns the image Mary builds of herself in her epistolary autobiography, it can be noticed that her identity is characterized by demure behaviour

as well as obedience to her relatives, especially in accepting an arranged marriage, while being in love with somebody else. Such a constructed image of female submission respected the conventions of the time, and would likely win her friend's approval.

The following extract expresses her real feelings at the time, along with her expected behaviour; it also shows her irony in the emphasis given to the contrast between appearance and inner truth, and her mature analysis of what a forced marriage implied. It is a forceful illustration of the value given to marriage seen as a worldly settlement in life:

I had now nothing to do but submit to my unhappy fortune, and to endeavour to reconcile myself to it... I was married with *great pomp*. Never was woe drest out in gayer colours, and when I was led to the altar, I wished from my soul I had been led, as Iphigenia was, to be sacrificed. I was sacrificed. I lost, not life indeed, but I lost all that makes life desirable – joy and peace of mind. (Llanover 1861, 29-30; her emphasis)

The use of figurative language, with the comparison between Iphigenia and herself, together with the high presence of verbs in the passive voice, highlights the position of Mary as an innocent victim of external events, and, while increasing the dramatic quality of the narration, elicits the empathy of the reader.

Figurative language will be further exploited, for example to underline her unhappiness as the wife of a much older, sick and often drunk, husband ('a man I looked upon as my tyrant – my jailor; one that I was determined to obey and oblige, but found it impossible to love'; Llanover 1861, 31). She also highlights her loneliness, often pointing out she had no one to ask for help and advice, or simply to open her heart to. By insisting on her young age and *naïveté*, she portrays herself as ignorant of the ways of the world and an innocent prey of men's unwanted attention. She also emphasises the seriousness of her character in her will to maintain her virtue intact.

In the social framework she is describing, there are, in fact, two types of women - the virtuous and the 'vain', 'extravagant' ones. She obviously belongs to the first group, and insists on underlining the fact that she did not perceive the evil nature of people (mostly men) around her, underestimating the risk her position as a faithful wife was running, of being corrupted by bad company. However, she describes herself as a determined person able to overcome her inexperience when her honour is at stake. Here is, for example, the narrative of the unexpected courtship of Germanico, where once again she shows the rhetorical quality of a fictional writer:

His age placed him amongst those that I could not imagine had any gallantry in their head – but was mistaken... as I did not observe anything in his behavior to me that could give me offence, I behaved towards him with the same indifference I did to my general acquaintance... Germanico sat next to me, but I soon wished for another neighbour. He stared at me the whole night, and put me so much out of countenance,

that I was ready to cry: he soon checked all my pleasure at the entertainment, the music sounded harsh, and everything appeared disagreeable... I abhorred the wretch and could not forgive his presumption, but how was my detestation of him increased a day or two after this odious supper, when, sorting some papers I had in my pocket, I found a letter from Germanico, with a passionate declaration of love! I threw it into the fire with the utmost indignation. (Llanover 1861, 83-84)

While the use of negative forms (i.e. 'I could not imagine', 'I did not observe') marks her ingenuity, the active voice of verbs highlights her agency in the events narrated. These linguistic devices, as well her lexical choice of strongly connoted words such 'harsh', 'disagreeable', 'detestation' and 'indignation', make the letter a means to reinforce a positive image of herself, at the same time building a portrait of eighteenth-century society with its intrigues and deceitfully polite conventions. She portrays a society ruled by norms of sociability, which should be followed scrupulously but are often violated. In other letters, she describes a world of alliances among young and less young women to avoid mistakes and pitfalls.

Her vivacious character is mentioned too, as well as her intellectual pursuits. She portrays herself as a girl brought up to love reading and learning (aspects that the Duchess would certainly approve of), an attitude which, once again, would put her among the virtuous ladies, as the following comment shows: '... though I did not pretend to much penetration or any judgment, I soon found their [her aunts'] conversation much less instructive, as well as less entertaining than his [her uncle's]. I had been brought up to love reading; they never read at all, or, if they did, idle books that I was not allowed to read' (Llanover 1861, 22). Her sense of humour and perceptive skill in observing and describing her contemporaries, is another aspect of her letters, as, for example, in the description of her first encounter with her future husband:

I expected to have seen somebody with the appearance of a gentleman, when the poor, old, dripping almost drowned Gromio was brought into the room, like Hob out of the well, his wig, his coat, his dirty boots, his large unwieldy person, and his crimson countenance were all subjects of great mirth and observation to me. (Llanover 1861, 23)

### 3. *The Letters to Ann Granville*

The thirty letters taken into consideration for the present analysis were written by Mary in the same years dealt with in the autobiographical letters, and therefore cover the same timeline of Mary's recollections. From a structural point of view, the letters to Ann differ from the autobiographical ones because they are properly dated and indicate the location from which they are sent, thus respecting the codes of etiquette of the time (Bannet 2005, 67). Salutation is

always present ('my dearest sister' being the most frequent one) and usually opens the letter, and closing formulas are also respected. The signature has a variety of forms derived from Mary's surname and referring to her role of wife: 'Mrs. Penderves', 'Penny Penny', 'Penelope' (which adds a metaphorical nuance of faithfulness to her signature); sometimes, the fictitious name 'Aspasia' is also used.

The letters to Ann offer a wider range of functions when compared with the letters to the Duchess. The narrative function which was predominant in the autobiographical letters is here only sporadically present, while describing people and places becomes more central, with detailed descriptions of the dresses and jewels worn by high society ladies. Giving information, reporting news and expressing opinions on people and events are also frequent, but mostly inscribed within the expected code of polite sociability. Mary's opinions and attitudes appear more straightforward and free-speaking, in the numerous cases when she gives her sister information about cultural events such as concerts, theatrical performances, or publications. The functions of giving advice and suggestions, totally absent in the autobiography, are frequently introduced, and are probably linked to the age of the recipient, as Mary plays the role of the 'experienced' woman instructing a younger sister.

From a stylistic point of view, the autobiographical letters have a smooth narrative flow which does not characterise the letters to her sister, which shift from one topic to the next quickly, as the main objective is to convey a variety of messages connected with the various functions already analysed. These letters are, after all, a way to converse with Ann and thus follow a conversational pattern. They reinforce, then, the eighteenth-century commonplace which compared familiar letter writing to conversation (Brant 2006, 21).

A striking difference between the two types of letters is the high presence of metadiscursive features. There are many references to the discursive practices, role and value, of letter writing. The main features concern:

- Acknowledgment of a letter received from Ann and her happiness about it. This is usually found after the salutation, as in: 'Your cheerful letter and good account of my dear papa has given me a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction' (Llanover 1861, 70).
- Acknowledgment of letters from other members of the family as in 'I have received my dear mama's obliging letter... and will pay my duty and thanks next post in a more particular manner' (Llanover 1861, 150).
- Lack of letters from her family as in 'Three posts have passed and no letter except that – which was without a date. My dearest sister must excuse my troublesome fears, but where two such friends as my mother and yourself are the constant object of my tenderest thoughts, I cannot help yielding to my apprehensions when I miss hearing from you...' (Llanover 1861, 147).
- Letters to be written to a third party but deferred, as in 'Pray assure my brother and Mrs. Carter of my humble service; I acknowledge myself their

debtor, but will pay them in a very little time' (Llanover 1861, 70), where letter writing is metaphorically introduced as a business exchange.

- Delays in writing letters to her sister or other members of the family, and consequent apologies as in 'I have been very rude in not sooner returning my thanks for your obliging letter, but I really have so little time myself, that I cannot do as I would or as I ought. Pray present my humble duty to my mama. I designed to write to her last post, but I was engaged...'

(Llanover 1861, 57).  
- Counting how many letters she is in debt/credit of as in 'I believe this is the fourth letter you have to answer' (Llanover 1861, 149).

- Letters written by her sister to a third party whose content is made known to her, as in 'I am rejoiced to hear by your letter to her [Mrs. Carter] that my mama is pretty well' (Llanover 1861, 79).

- Letters written to her sister by a third party as in 'You will have a letter from him [brother Bevill] this post' (Llanover 1861, 71).

- Letters received from a third party, asking questions about her sister as in 'Yesterday I had a letter from Miss Leigh, who asks me many questions about you: as, if you are in town? If you mind your musick? and *to crown all* if you are to be married soon?' (Llanover 1861, 80; her emphasis).

- Letters written by a third party, enclosed by Mary within her own letter as in 'Enclosed I have sent you Sally's letter; pray take care of it, and send it me by the first opportunity, but I desire you will read this first...'

(Llanover 1861, 167). These features are often combined as in the following passage in which the pleasure of receiving and writing letters is emphasized, as well as the importance of letter writing as a familial link whose function is to substitute, albeit imperfectly, the face to face conversation denied by distance (Fitzmaurice 2002, 35):

You are very unjust to yourself, my dearest sister, in saying you have it not in your power to make your letters agreeable: they are so to me more than I can express, and I shall always think my time well employed in writing to you, when in return I have so much pleasure as the favour of your last letter gave me. When I am writing to you I am so intent on the subject, that I forget all things but yourself, and by that means you can never fail of a long letter from me, for I never grow weary; and when I have finished my letter, I am sorry to think the conversation is broke off, for imperfect as it is, it gives me more satisfaction than any personal one that I meet with here. Though so many hills and vales separate our bodies, thought (that is free and unlimited) makes up in some measure that misfortune, and though my eyes are shut, I see my dearest sister in my dreams. I talked with you all last night and was mortified when the vision fled. (Llanover 1861, 98)

These letters construct a different image of the author, who considers writing to Ann an appropriate site to express her feelings about her family, and show the central role family plays in her life. She is affectionate and fond of her family relationships, an attitude that is confirmed by her respectful and caring words about all the family members. In this sense, these letters respect the conventions of familial letters, as there are repeated expressions of appreciation

towards her sister, of love towards other members of the family (mother, brother, uncles, aunts); there are inquiries about the health of family members, and news about the health, or other matters, of common acquaintance and relatives are given. People are mentioned in an elliptical way since the sender and the recipient share the necessary background information, and nicknames are often used. These data, which are clarified by extra information provided by the editor of the letters, emphasise the bond between the sisters. At the same time, Mary is superior to her recipient, both in age and status, and the age difference between the sisters sometimes causes a slightly patronizing tone in Mary, when she gives her sister advice, even if she generally resorts to a teasing tone.

Since Mary also received requests for goods to be bought in town for her family, the topic of money which is never mentioned in the autobiographical letters, is present in the familiar letters, where the price of things is often given:

... has bought two pounds of Bohea [tea], at thirteen shilling a pound, which the man say is extraordinary good; but everything of that kind grows very dear, chocolate especially. I have sent you a pound at three and sixpence, the best in town at that price... (Llanover 1861, 134-135)

References to money are also found when Mary describes the dresses and jewels worn by the royal family and the aristocrats, as in 'The Queen has upon her petticoat for the coronation, twenty-four hundred thousand pounds worth of jewels' (Llanover 1861, 136).

As the addressee was living a restricted social life in the country, Mary was ready to involve her sister in her own social life in 'town', that is London, or in the other cities she was living in. Therefore, news about her entertainments are shared, regarding dinners she has been invited to, masquerades she has taken part in, visits she has, or has been, paid. Special events such as the celebrations for the Queen's birthday or the coronation of George III and Queen Caroline in 1727, are obviously given great attention, and described with richness of details. She describes a world of intense social life (which she was able to enjoy most, after her husband's death), and news about gentlewomen and gentlemen unknown to Ann is given, often becoming real gossip as in the following passage:

Great news stirring: Lady Betty Berkeley, daughter to the earl of that name, being almost fifteen, has thought it time to be married, and ran away last week with Mr. Henley a man noted for his imprudence and immorality, but a *good estate* and a *beau* – irresistible charms in these days. (Llanover 1861, 156-157; her emphasis)

Through these descriptions she builds the image of a lively witty woman, who enjoys entertainment, and is an active member of the buzzing social life of the upper classes. This image appears only sporadically in the autobiography, where she also mentions her social life, but foregrounding the doubts more than the joys this life caused her.

Most interesting is, however, the way Mary shared her cultural life with her sister. Every letter devotes sample space to detailed information and comments about books she has read, from Voltaire to Pope, as well as theatrical and musical performances she has attended. In this way, she leads her younger sister along the path of polite education, but at the same time she presents herself as a lady of sense and virtues, able to appreciate the importance of cultural values.<sup>3</sup> Here are a few comments about Händel, and Gay's *Beggars' Opera*:

Yesterday I was at the rehearsal of the new opera composed by Handel: I like it extremely, but the taste of the town is so depraved, that nothing will be approved of but the burlesque. The Beggars' Opera entirely triumphs over the Italian one; I have not seen it, but everybody that has seen it, says it is very comical and full of humour; the songs will soon be published, and I will send them to you. (Llanover 1861, 158)

I desire you will introduce the Beggars' Opera at Gloucester; you must sing it everywhere *but at church*, if you have a mind to be *like the polite world*. (Llanover 1861, 163; her emphasis)

The abundance of comments on cultural life confirms an aspect of her personality which appears in the autobiography when she mentions her love for reading and theatrical entertainment.

Despite the obvious importance of writing letters to her sister and the repeated assurances of her joy in 'conversing' with her, Mary's letters to her sister are not confidential, since she does not convey her feelings about more private matters such as her unhappy married life, or the various intrigues which threatened her peace of mind. There are, in fact, no references to the situations and feelings of loneliness and despair she would afterwards narrate at length in the autobiographical letters. Whereas the autobiography focuses on her inner feelings and real reactions, and her social life is a background to her states of mind, the letters to her sister foreground her social life, leaving space to her feelings only in sketchy comments which do not reveal any of the worries and sad thoughts which occupied her mind. The letters to Ann are not considered a suitable site for the expression of feelings other than satisfaction, pleasure of, and curiosity towards, life. This silence about inner emotions, may be due to the fact that letters would have been read by other people beside her sister, and therefore to the certainty that the necessary privacy would be violated. 'I won't trust the post', she affirms in one of the letters to Ann, adding that 'circumstances and several particulars must be told, which cannot be so well expressed in writing', and that her hope is to meet her sister 'before the year is expired and tell old stories' (Llanover 1861, 80). Another possible explanation for her silence, is that she did not intend to convey to her family the sad condition her very family had put her in. Thus, the politeness of manners makes her familiar letters a vehicle for news, but not for real intimacy.

Mary's silence might also depend on her decision not to overload the young age of her sister with her sorrows and regrets. As a matter of fact, as her sister became older, Mary confided more in her, although to a limited extent. An interesting example of this is offered by a letter Mary wrote to her sister during a moment of crisis in her life. After the death of her husband, Mary was courted by Lord Baltimore, and nourished an attachment for him, which would be disappointed by his later behaviour and marriage with somebody else. In a letter written on Christmas Day to Ann in 1729, Mary describes a meeting she had at the opera with Baltimore, introduced with the fictitious names 'Bas' and 'Guyamore', and a subsequent visit paid by him. These two episodes, which really destroyed Mary's hopes in a stable love relationship with the gentleman and caused her great suffering, are described, even reporting the gentleman's words, but without really expressing the depth of her attachment and disillusion. Were it not for the autobiographical letter, where she narrates the same episodes to the Duchess, we would not understand how critical this moment was in her life. Here is, for example, how Mary outlines the episode to Ann:

Guyamore was there [at the opera], and sat behind me the first act, came again as soon as the opera was done and led me to my chair; talked in the old strain, of being unhappy, and that I was to answer for all his flights and extravagance. I told him that was so large a charge, that I should be sorry to have it placed to my account. However, on Monday he came... (Llanover 1861, 232-233)

and here is how the same episode is narrated in the XVI autobiographical letter:

Herminius [Lord Baltimore] was there, and placed himself just behind me; he told me he wondered where I had buried myself; he could neither see me at home nor abroad, and that he had been miserable to see me; that since his opportunities were so few he could no longer help declaring that he '*had been in love with me for five years*', during which time I had kept him in such awe that he had not had courage to make a declaration of his love to me. I was in such confusion I knew not what I saw or heard for some time, but finding he was going on with the same subject, I softly begged he would not interrupt my attention to the opera, and if he had anything to say to me, that was *not* the proper place. He then asked 'if I should be at home the next day?', I said 'I should'. I cannot say I listened much to the music, and I had a secret satisfaction in thinking this affair would be explained some way or other, and free me from the anxiety of uncertainty. (Llanover 1861, 240; her emphasis)

A comparison between the two narratives shows how differently Mary narrates the story. Apart from the different names used for Baltimore in the two letters, the second extract tells with abundance of details what is briefly mentioned in the first extract. The precision of the details is particularly surprising if we remember that the letter to the Duchess was written eleven years after the event, while the letter to Ann was written soon after it. Herminius' expressions of distress and love are reduced to a simple 'talked in the old strain, of

being unhappy', while the autobiographical letter reports his remarks in indirect speech. In the letter to Ann, there is no mention of Baltimore's love declaration. Consequently, the letter gives no hint of Mary's reactions of confusion while and after Baltimore made his declaration, nor to her hopes of solving the 'anxiety' caused by Baltimore's undecided behaviour. Mary's implied suggestion of continuing the conversation in a more suitable place is not mentioned at all, and in the first extract it seems that Baltimore's visit the following Monday is spontaneous, and not depending on what had happened at the opera. Direct speech is used in the autobiographical letter, which makes the narration more lively.

The Monday visit, which put an end to the relationship between Mary and Baltimore is also narrated differently in the two letters. Although Mary tries to report the conversation she had with Baltimore in an objective and detached way, this time quoting his sentences and her replies, the comments which follow the exchange of cues, reveal her real state of mind:

He sat down and immediately asked me 'if I did not think they were miserable people that were strangers to love, but added he, you are so great a philosopher that I dread your answer'. I told him, as for 'philosophy, I did not pretend to it;' but 'I endeavoured to make my life easy by living according to reason, and that my opinion of love was that it either made people very miserable or very happy,' he said it '*made him miserable*.' 'That, I suppose, my Lord,' said I, '*proceeds from yourself: perhaps you place it upon a wrong foundation*.' He looked confounded, turned the discourse, and went away immediately after. I must confess I could not behave myself with indifference, and I have been in no public place since. (Llanover 1861, 233; her emphasis)

Moreover, so as not to mark the importance of the episode in her life, Mary soon changes subject and turns her sister's attention to other topics, as if what she has just written about was not that important in her life, but only one example of the oddities of the people she met.

The conversation between the two is narrated differently in the letter to the Duchess:

It began with common talk of news. Some marriage was named, and we both observed how little probability of happiness there was in most of the fashionable matches where interest and not inclination was consulted. At last he said he was determined never to marry, unless he was well assured of the affection of the person he married. My reply was, can you have a stronger proof (if the person is at her own disposal) than her consenting to marry you? He replied that was not sufficient. I said he was *unreasonable*, upon which he started up and said, 'I find, madam, this is a point in which we shall never agree'. He looked piqued and angry, made a low bow and went away immediately, and left me in such confusion that I could hardly recollect what had past, nor can I to this hour – but from that time till he was married *we never met*. The vexation of mind... affected me to so great a degree that I fell ill of a fever the very day that Herminius made me that last extraordinary visit. As it fell on my spirits, I was for some days in a great deal of danger. (Llanover 1861, 240-241; her emphasis)

'I cannot recollect minutely our conversation', explains Mary to the Duchess in her XVI letter. Thus, there are no direct quotations this time, apart from the last sentence pronounced by Baltimore, which was obviously inscribed in Mary's memory. The exchange of cues quoted in the letter to Ann is not repeated in the autobiographical letters, where it looks as if she were reporting a polite conversation on the topic of marriage and love between two members of an enlightened society. However, Mary's reply ('... proceeds from yourself ...') reveals the implicit unsaid discourse which is taking place between the two participants (about a possible marriage between them), and causes the sharp reaction of Baltimore. The modifier 'confounded' used in the first extract, is given stronger connotations ('piqued and angry') in the autobiographical letters. The aside ('nor can I to this hour') reveals how much the episode still holds in her mind a decade later, while the negative load of the lexical choices in her final narrative lines ('vexation', 'affected', 'ill', 'fever', 'danger') rhetorically underline her distress.

Once again, then, it is in the autobiographical letter written many years later, that Mary really opens her heart, even if the letter to Ann hints at some features of intimacy.

#### 4. *Concluding Remarks*

As James Daybell points out, 'as social documents' women's letters 'are useful indicators of female literacy, the quality of familial and other relationships, and of women's social interaction in general' (2001, 3). The letters of Mary Delany provide a further example of the way epistolary writing can fulfill a variety of goals and help reconstruct not only the writer's identity but also the profile of the social context in which the letters were written.

What both types of letters have in common is the importance of certain aspects of women's life, such as the major role played by family and relationships. However, the analysis of the autobiographical letters written by Mary Delany to the Duchess of Portland and the familiar letters written to her sister Ann Granville highlights differences in terms of content and goals as well as textual, stylistic, and metadiscursive differences.

The letters to the Duchess contain Mary's recollections of a great part of her life and are meant to create an autobiographical narrative of her life, whereas the letters to Ann were meant as a vehicle of family communication, and a way to maintain family bonds. As a consequence of the different goals of the two letter types, language functions inside the letters are also different. The function of narrating past events is fundamental in the autobiography, whereas a greater variety of functions can be found in the familiar letters.

Time also plays a major role in differentiating the two letter types. The letters to Ann are the result of immediate reaction to contemporary events, whereas the autobiographical letters are written a few decades after the events,

when these (and the people involved in them) are sifted by memory. Moreover, as she is writing an autobiography, Mrs. Delany has to concentrate on her feelings and reactions, in order to recreate and convey her state of mind at the time of the events. The letters to Ann focus on many topics, which partly depend on the nature of familiar letters (such as the health of relatives, information about matters concerning common friends), but also depend on the writer's personality and interests. For example, many of the letters to Ann are devoted to cultural events, such as performances and social highlights. The major role of her social background portrays Mary as a lady of fashion and a happy member of 'town' society. In the autobiographical letters, on the other hand, the social background is not seen as important as in the letters to Ann, and is often narrated as dangerous and confusing. Therefore, the letters to her sister are richer in details which are unnecessary in the autobiographical letters where 'truth' is seen as fundamental, albeit subjective truth.

Metadiscursive features play a vital role in the familiar letter, while the autobiography in letters introduces references only to the writer's previous or future letters, only as a means of giving cohesion and cohesiveness to the narration.

Finally, the analysis shows that Mrs. Delany, although fond of her sister, did not consider the letters to Ann an appropriate site for intimacy – at least not in the years whose events she would later narrate in the autobiographical letters to the Duchess of Portland. This is probably due, above all, to the fact that family letters were very likely read to, or by, other members of the family, while the letters to the Duchess were for her eyes only. Maybe as a consequence of this, in terms of self-(re)presentation, Mrs. Delany mainly portrays herself as a naïf, lonely, and suffering young woman, as an innocent victim of external events, and unwanted male attention, in the letters to the Duchess. At the same time, she positions herself among the virtuous ladies, who defend their honour in a dangerous society. In the letters to her sister, Mary mainly portrays herself as a woman of sense and virtue, and a lively member of polite society.

<sup>1</sup> In 1900 George Paston published an abridged and popular version of Lady Llanover's six-volume work (1861-1862), entitled *Mrs Delany (Mary Granville): A Memoir*. In his introduction, Paston stated that he had decided to publish the memoir because the size and cost of the volumes edited by Lady Llanover were 'beyond the reach of general public'; besides, they had long been out of print. However, in his work, Paston simply quotes extracts from the autobiographical letters and the letters by, or to, Mrs. Delany; he also inserts his own comments to connect the extracts, thus reconstructing Mary's life story.

<sup>2</sup> On the slipperiness of the features of autobiography, see Anderson 2001, 1-17.

<sup>3</sup> Mary's later relationship with the Bluestocking group, a circle of learned gentlewomen and gentlemen, is worth recalling. For a portrait of Mary as a Bluestocking member, see Scott 1947. On the letters of the Bluestocking ladies, see Sairio 2008.

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*The Cultural, The Historical,  
The Fictional*



# Michelangelo, a Tireless Letter Writer

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## *Abstract*

A titan of artistic creation, the sculptor-painter-architect Michelangelo was also a tireless letter writer. Five hundred and eighteen of his letters have reached us, stretching from his youth to the eve of his death, but we know that many others have been lost. Written in a kind of familiar Florentine and in a style of minimalist 'realism' – which does not prevent the presence of either impetuous polemical flights or pages of literary indulgence – these letters deal mainly with everyday subjects: day-by-day relationships, either endearing or resentful, with his relatives, financial or property matters and, above all, the marriage problems which concerned his nephew Leonardo, the sole heir of the family. But one also discovers in them the artist's warm feelings of friendship and love, his poetic and aesthetic exchanges, his relationships, often conflictual, with his fellow-artists and patrons as well as his reflections on old age and death. All in all, these letters represent a documentary chronicle of a Florentine bourgeois family and the technical hassle of an entrepreneur's activity. If, on the one hand, the *Carteggio* does not shed light either on Michelangelo's conception of art or the way in which he realized his works, on the other it illustrates certain latent aspects of his projects, as well as of his personality, which was at the same time melancholy and aggressive, surprisingly whole and manifold. This luxuriant correspondence presents, so to speak, a 'genetic' interest, since it reveals the hidden face of the brilliant conceiver and creator, of the artist and entrepreneur struggling with the obstacles whose overcoming makes creation possible.

*Keywords:* Art, *Carteggio*, Familiar Letters, Michelangelo, Melancholic Disposition

## 1. *Introduction*

Michelangelo was a tireless letter writer: more than 518 of his letters, today readable in a bulky critical edition (Fiorato, ed., 2010) are extant; but, as I have argued elsewhere, if one considers the number of letters which were addressed to him, it appears evident that many of his replies are lost.

The initial point needs making that he did not like writing, which is easily understood when we consider his exhausting days, occupied by handling the hammer or the brush in very uncomfortable positions on his scaffolds. 'To write is for him, he says, 'un grande affanno', a painful job (Fiorato, ed., 2010, Introduction, xciii).

But should we take him at his word? What is certain is that he does not feel at his ease with a pen in his hand: to write, he says, 'non è mia professione';<sup>1</sup> and he is conscious of the poor quality of his epistolary style, but only when compared to that of the great literati of his time, defenders of the fine style,

who practiced the 'volgare illustre' that is, a formal, high literary language. He apologises for this to his most cultured correspondents and, sometimes, he asks his friends to help him revise his texts.

It should be recalled that Michelangelo was self-taught, living side by side with men of letters, or even persons of high rank, but neither attending university, nor enjoying the privilege of learned tutors. As is true with Leonardo da Vinci, one could say that he was an 'uomo senza lettere' (Leonardo 1974, 14), an unlettered man, that is, that he did not know Latin, a fact which constituted the dividing line between the high-level literati and the rest. But it was this very linguistic *mediocritas*, which he was not proud of, that appears to us today to be one of the merits of his writing, since his style and meanings gain in spontaneity and simplicity what they lose in literary refinement.

Michelangelo's letters are therefore as unliterary as possible, albeit with amazing exceptions when he addresses some great personalities, or addressees to whom he wishes to show 'his love'. In such cases, one has the impression that he adopts a completely different style, which becomes eloquent, pompous, and hyperbolic, even verging on caricature. When meant for poorly educated people, his letters are, all in all, *factual* and *functional*: factual in the substance and functional in matter and destination. This is why his language and style are most frequently matter-of-fact and denotative. One is tempted to say that he writes as he speaks – or, rather, as he spoke when he was in Florence: his language, as Marziano Guglielminetti has pointed out, at least in his numerous business letters, recalls the practical style used by merchants in their register books, that is, in their daily management accounts (1977, 226 ff).

Now, this style which, on the whole, can be defined *minimalist* (I will not say *realistic*, for the term would imply a literary stance) and which reflects ordinary speech, this sort of first-person chronicle, at times reveals, as we shall see, some residues which can not only be attributed to a more elaborate kind of language, but also convey, without artifice or mannerism, a great documentary richness: an inexhaustible quarry of information about the history of an artist and a middle-class Florentine Renaissance family.

There would be a lot to say about the contents of Michelangelo's *Carteggio*.<sup>2</sup> Here, instead of compiling a long inventory of the small data contained in the letters, I will limit myself to discussing three important issues:

- his relationship with his relatives and, in particular, the problem of the social promotion of his family;
- his reflections on art and his relationships with collaborators and patrons;
- finally, an intimate issue: his melancholic disposition and vision of sickness and death.

## 2. *Negotiating the Social Promotion of His Family*

About two thirds of Michelangelo's letters are exchanged with members of his family. The fact that for most of his artistic life he lived outside Florence obviously

explains such intense epistolary exchanges, as later will happen to Mme de Sévigné because of her long periods of separation from her daughter, Mme de Grignan.

Michelangelo's relationships with his relatives – which are often hearty, affable and even warm – were however far from always being smooth; and the quarrels and grudges which split the Buonarroti family, nearly always owing to issues concerning economic interests and property, outline a *saga* which is a mirror reflecting the avatars of the bourgeois society of the time.

In terms of biography, reading his letters one becomes aware that, as Michelangelo's reputation and opulence grow, he becomes the true head of the household, the mentor of his brothers and, even more, of his nephew Leonardo, who appears to be his privileged correspondent. Thus, he day by day takes care of the numerous problems of his many relatives, concerning himself about their daily existence and health, the purchase of property, the creation of a textile workshop for his brothers, almsgiving and other deeds of charity, recriminations against the nonchalance of his relatives, marriage negotiations on behalf of his nephew, and so on.

One of the preoccupations which obsess his mind as he grows old is his own social status and that of his family, which was of modest origins and condition, even though many of its members had been employed by the *Signoria* of Florence. Thus, his letters frequently reveal concern about the social promotion of his lineage.

His first important commissions, generously remunerated, allowed him not only to grant his family regular assistance – a fact which often determined susceptibilities and frictions – but also make purchases, in the form of heavy investments, meant to accrue his assets and those of his family. For him, these acquisitions were not simply meant to secure – as sometimes he affirms – an income for his old age, but also satisfy his desire for prestige, something which he acknowledges in various letters: 'è non truovo che a Firenze sien durate le famiglie, se non per forza di cose stabile' (II, 73; letter 318);<sup>3</sup> and, more explicitly, in the following passage:

Circa il comperare la casa, io vi affermo il medesimo. Cioè che cerciate di comperare una casa che sia onorevole, di mille cinquecento o dumila scudi, e che sia nel quartier nostro, se si può... Io dico questo perché una casa onorevole nella città fa onore assai, perché si vede più che non fanno le possessione, e perché noi sia(n) pure cittadini discesi di nobilissima stirpe. Mi son sempre ingegnato di risuscitar la casa nostra, ma non ho avuto frategli da ciò. (II, 56-57; letter 298)<sup>4</sup>

It is affirmed that Michelangelo – all his biographers underline this fact – boasted that he came from the grand noble Canossa family (II, 80; letter 327). This genealogical pride does not appear to have any consistency, but it clearly shows his anxiety about the defence of the reputability of his lineage. In many letters, he emphatically reminds his father and brothers of their dignity as Florentine citizens, their noble origin and the role once played by the Buonarrotis in the government of their city.

More concretely, Michelangelo's correspondence bears witness to his anxiety to deliver his family from their status as craftsmen and minor officials, by proudly

reminding them of their origins (II, 56-57 and 76-77; letters 298, 323). We know that he refused to be considered a salaried artist who traded in his works. And he admonishes his brother Buonarroto, who meant to marry a lower-class but well-off girl, by saying: 'Anchora ti dico che a me non piace impacciarsi per avaritia con uomini più vili assai che non se' tu' (I, 61; letter 66).<sup>5</sup>

On this issue, the climax is an episode which concerns his brother Gismondo, the lame duck of the family, who had decided to live in Settignano, one of their lands, as a peasant. Michelangelo sharply deplored the fact that his brother was the family's disgrace: '... che Gismondo torni abitare in Firenze, acciò che con tanta mia vergogna non si dica più qua che io ò un fratello che a Settignano va dietro a' buoi' (II, 57; letter 298).<sup>6</sup>

On many occasions he rebuked his brothers – who were less infatuated than him with matters of nobility – because they lacked ambition, and reminded them of his tireless devotion in his efforts to promote his family. To the same Gismondo he writes:

... io son ito da dodici anni in qua tapinando per tucta Italia, sopportato ogni vergogna, patito ogni stento, lacerato il corpo mio in ongni faticha, messa la vita propria a mille pericoli solo per aiutar la chasa mia; e ora che io ò cominciato a rrilevarla un poco, tu solo voglia esser quello che schompigli e' rrovini in una ora quel che i' ò facto in tanti anni e chon tanta faticha... (I, 47; letter 48, postscriptum)<sup>7</sup>

In short, in Michelangelo one constantly finds the preoccupation to deliver the Buonarroto's from their popular condition – a condition connected with craftsmanship, small commerce and public office –, with the aim of promotion to the ranks of the republican oligarchy, which manifested itself in the acquisition of an honourable mansion and a rich estate. Altogether, Michelangelo aspires to a sort of kinship with the bourgeois nobility of a Ghibelline inclination.

This obsessive vagary of an artist has often been made fun of but he took his infatuation very seriously. Indeed, two kinds of reasons may have determined this aspiration to social climbing. On the one hand, his prodigious artistic – and also financial – success, which made him a universally known 'divine' artist; on the other, and correlatively, his numerous and sometimes intimate relationships, not only with the greatest artists of the time, but also with the rich Florentine and Roman bourgeoisie, who were connected with banking (Luigi del Riccio, the Strozzi's, the Ridolfi's) and with high politics (Soderini, the Pope and Cardinals). Thus, we may conclude that, during the whole of his career, he practically and objectively changed his social status, and allowed his family to do the same.

### 3. *Reflections on Art*

Coming to our second point, Michelangelo's observations on art, one is sometimes disappointed to see that works of art and aesthetic reflections do not

occupy much of his correspondence. However, the information he does give about this field and the sparse appreciations which he formulates of his trade, cast valuable light on his creative activity as an artist, and also as an entrepreneur.

It is evident that Michelangelo was not interested in artistic speculation. He clearly reveals this in his reply to the famous consultation called *il paragone* (the comparison), launched by the Medicean historiographer Benedetto Varchi, in which the Florentine man of letters asked the great artists of his time to express their opinion on whether sculpture or painting was the superior art.

In this contest, Michelangelo adopted an ambivalent, though courteous, attitude, holding aloof from either position, while affirming the superiority of sculpture, his craft *par excellence*. But he ends his reply – not without disingenuousness – by writing that it would be well to sign a peace treaty between these two arts and ‘... lasciar tante dispute; perché vi va più tempo che a far le figure...’; and, further on: ‘Infinite cose, e non più decto, ci sare’ da dire di simile scientie; ma, come ho decto, vorrebbon troppo tempo, e io n’ò poco, perché non solo son vechio, ma quasi nel numero de’ morti’ (II, 66; letter 309).<sup>8</sup>

These remarks may explain why, in his *Correspondence*, one finds so few reflections on the nature, function and theory of art even in the letters addressed to his illustrious artist friends like Vasari, Cellini, Sebastiano del Piombo, Bronzino, Ammannati. It is clear that for Michelangelo art is a matter of practical achievement rather than intellectual speculation. Exceptions are rare: in a very didactic letter dating from the years 1550-1560, meant as a critique of a project by his rival Sangallo, he discourses, taking inspiration from Vitruvius, on the homology between the different levels and ornaments; and, taking the human face and its symmetries (eyes, ears) and asymmetries (nose, mouth) as an example, he concludes: ‘E per[ò] è cosa certa che le membra dell’architettura dipendono dalle membra dell’uomo. Chi non è stato o non è buon maestro di figure, e massimo di notomia, non se ne può intendere’ (II, 185; letter 471).<sup>9</sup>

His considerations on art concern his own works hardly at all; they are simply made the object of allusions which are for the most part technical and professional. Thus, the fusion of the gigantic statue of Pope Julius II, in Bologna, which at first seemed to have miscarried, will be the object of about a dozen of anxious letters to his family (I, 26-37; letters 28-37). With yet stronger reason, the object of other anxious letters was the sculpting of the tomb of the same Julius II, whose execution implied four projects and subsequent contracts, and whose realisation, gradually reduced, will extend for many decades. In any case, this gigantic work will cause Michelangelo great torments (what will be called the ‘tragedy’ of the tomb), which will accompany a large part of his career (1505-1545). It is also necessary to consider the laborious extraction and routing of the marbles from Carrara to Florence or Rome and, above all, the endless building site of St Peter’s, staked off with dramatic vicissitudes, as well as with contrasts with his companions and rivals.

Whatever the actual facts may have been, and not mentioning explicit paranoia, it is clear that ‘the great master’ was constantly led to explain himself,

justify himself, to be self-critical, revealing, by these attitudes, his demanding, scrupulous temperament, but also a tendency towards bad conscience, or even a sense of guilt (I, 42, letter 44; I, 123, letter 140; I, 160-161, letter 182). André Chastel went as far as to argue that this titan had a sort of 'complexe d'échec' (1958, 130-133). On the other hand, there are no allusions to the initial failure of the Sistine Chapel, and only a few humorous reflections, levelled at Aretino, about the 'scandal' of the nudes in the *Last Judgement* (I, 193; letter 220).

On the whole, what prevail in his letters are instructions, both explicative and rectifying, accompanied, on occasion, by sketches (II, 182; letter 467) directed to the collaborators who worked under his guidance, such as the reconstruction, again addressed to Vasari (which he made by heart) of his project for the staircase of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, which occupies half a dozen letters (among which II, 155; letter 434 and II, 156; letter 435). The same applies to two letters, addressed to Vasari, in which he deplors and rectifies, with the help of some sketches (II, 182; letter 467) the gross mistake made by his master builder, Bastiano Menotti, in the building of a chapel in St Peter's Basilica.

Most allusions to his works or construction sites are therefore what Enzo Noé Girardi calls 'working letters' (1974, 352) by the artist, craftsman and entrepreneur: that is to say, they express preoccupations concerning the preparation, development and realisation of his works, which are in most cases seen from the technical, financial and even juridical points of view.

Altogether, however, his 'artistic' allusions and reflections which appear to be external, are of great interest, since they present – albeit in the negative – an aspect which can be defined as *genetic*: indeed, they reveal the hidden face of the inventor and creator of genius, that is, of the artist-technician coping with obstacles and difficulties whose painful surmounting will make the 'creation' possible.

#### 4. *The Melancholic Disposition*

'La mia allegrezza è la malinconia, / e 'l mio riposo son questi disagi' (Fiorato, ed., 2011, 267, ll. 25-26),<sup>10</sup> writes Michelangelo in one of his poems. Melancholy is indeed for him a permanent spiritual disposition which finds confirmation in some of his art works, and especially in his poems. Even though the torments of his mind and soul are, in his letters, less visible than in the *Rime*, the letters profusely convey the intimate conflicts by which Michelangelo was accompanied throughout the whole of his career. One can say that anguish and melancholy are dominant attitudes with him, and to these feelings, by contrast and compensating counterpoint, is opposed an occasional 'comic' disposition based on satire, irony and humour.

In his correspondence there are no sombre confessions like the one which emerges in his 'nocturnal' sonnet (104), where he writes about the distribution of fortunes, which is governed by the sun and the moon 'Onde 'l caso, la sorte

e la fortuna / in un momento nachuer di ciascuno; / e a me consegnaro il tempo bruno, / come a simil nel parto e nella cuna' (*ibid.*, 104, ll. 5-8).<sup>11</sup>

It is evident that Michelangelo, nailed to the imperatives of everyday life, was too deeply engaged with his material needs and obstinacy to realise his titanic works to find the leisure to indulge, in his letters, in his saturnine disposition. But the numerous avatars of his artistic career must have largely contributed to worsening his natural sombre disposition. It is revealing that in his correspondence the most excruciating moments of anguish (let alone mourning) derive from his professional problems.

Furthermore, the breaking off which determined, about 1534, his definitive departure from Florence occasioned the fact that, during about thirty years, cut off from his family and from friendly cultured Florentine relationships, he was to experience a trying isolation, only assuaged by a few solid Roman friendships, but made heavier by intense and passionate daily work.

Pursued or induced solitude, or pursued because it was induced: it is not easy to distinguish between these different stances. But it is certain that his hypochondriac unsociability, accompanied by a sort of asceticism, could only intensify his misanthropic 'desolation' of which the sinister 'capitolo'<sup>12</sup> 107 of the *Rime* intends to give a burlesque vision: 'T' sto rinchiuso come la midolla / dà la sua scorza, e povero e solo, / come spirito legato in un ampolla.' (*ibid.*, 267 ll. 1-3).<sup>13</sup>

In his letters, we find some intimate cogitations, which are at the same time more direct and more radical. Already in 1509 he wrote from Bologna to his brother Buonarrotto: 'Io sto qua in grande afanno e chon grandissima faticha di chorpo, e non ò amici di nessuna sorte; e no' ne voglio; e non ò tanto tempo che io possa mangiare el bisonio mio' (I, 49; letter 50).<sup>14</sup> Other statements, scattered through many decades, confirm this situation and spiritual condition: 'T' non ò preso la provigione già è passato l'ano e co[n]bacto con la povertà; son molto solo alle noie, e òne tante che mi te[n]ghano più occhupato che non fa l'arte...' (I, 166; letter 188).<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere he says: '... no ne so niente, perché non pratico con nessuno, né con altri' (II, 118; letter 378);<sup>16</sup> and he moans about his terrible anguish which prevented him not only from living but also from painting: 'non posso vivere, non che dipingere' (II, 19; letter 248).<sup>17</sup>

Poverty, which, on the other hand, was intermittent and temporary, was certainly not the main cause of this melancholic solitude, and sometimes one senses in his letters other psychological reasons, more closely connected to his stern and distrustful character: 'Io ò pochissime pratiche in Roma... e se io richieggo un di questi d'una cosa, per ognuna richieggon me di mille: però mi bisogna praticar pochi' (II, 92; letter 344; postcriptum).<sup>18</sup>

He always shunned company, except that of a few rare and gratifying friends, like Luigi del Riccio, the writer Donato Giannotti, the marchioness and poet Vittoria Colonna, the painter and disciple Sebastiano del Piombo, and a few others. With yet stronger reason, he abhorred frivolities; and there is a striking contrast between his austere way of living and that of Leonardo,

Raphael, or Giulio Romano, who aspired to living like lords. Therefore, certain letters witness the fact that now and then convivial company gave him great solace, and also regret for certain lost friendly encounters. As he writes to Sebastiano del Piombo: ‘... el vostro amicho capitano Chuio e certi altri gentilomini volsono, lor gratia, che io andassi a cena chon loro, di che ebi grandissimo piacere, perché usci’ um pocho del mio malinchonico, o vero del mio pazzo...’ (I, 163; letter 185).<sup>19</sup>

It is necessary to acknowledge that in about fifteen pleasant letters addressed to intimate friends, there appear some moments of serenity, abandon, even joviality, which are rare in his *Carteggio* as a whole, where anxiety and anger dominate.

Certainly, during the last years of his life, his solitude becomes a tragic, and even unbearable burden. Thus, when he thanks his nephew Leonardo for sending him some flasks of good wine, he bitterly notices that there is no one left with whom to share it, because all his friends have disappeared (II, 166; letter 448).<sup>20</sup> And, although he has always tried to keep his nephew at a distance, he now, after the death of his collaborator and friend Urbino in 1555, addresses a real call for help to him. In the end, during the last weeks of his life, he sends six subsequent letters to the same Leonardo, asking him to join him in Rome to assist him in his last instants. Unfortunately, Leonardo will arrive too late: his uncle had passed away, thankfully comforted by the presence of the painter Daniele da Volterra and by his old ‘lover’ Tommaso Cavalieri.

### 5. *Old Age, Illness and Death*

The titanic work of Michelangelo reveals an exceptionally strong temperament and a very sturdy physical constitution, as is confirmed by the age of his death, uncommon at that time: eighty-nine years. More than by illness, which in a way spared him and which suggested reflections that were sombre but rather hopeful and even facetious, he was obsessed by old age. As happens in his *Rime*, this obsession appears very early in his writings: ‘... perché io sono vechio, non mi pare, per megliorare dugiento o trecento duchati al Papa in questi marmi, perderci tanto tempo...’ (I, 105; letter 119),<sup>21</sup> he wrote to Domenico Buoninsegni, the Pope’s superintendent of commissions, when he was forty-four. Since then, allusions to age will become a leitmotif by which he justified the many failures or delays in delivering his works; but this does not exclude a concrete and sincere consciousness, which was evidently subjective, of premature ageing: ‘Io ò grande obrigo, e son vechio e mal disposto, che s’io lavoro un dì, bisogna che io me ne posi quatro’ (I, 145; letter 164).<sup>22</sup> In spite of an exhausting work, Michelangelo seems to have been particularly impervious to strain and, all in all, illness does not seem to have much persecuted him. Sometimes he succumbed, even seriously, as happened in June, 1544, which is not astonishing, since that was the year in which he completed the

creation of his prodigious *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel. This we know from a letter dated 23 June 1544 which Michelangelo's faithful friend Luigi del Riccio wrote to Roberto Strozzi, informing him that Michaelangelo was seriously ill and that he had convinced him to be sheltered and cared for in his home (II, 26; letter 259).

But, a month later, Michelangelo, recovered, quips on his health troubles: 'Son guarito e spero vivere qualche tempo, poi che 'l cielo à messa la mia sanità in man di maestro Baccio e nel trebbian degl'Ulivieri' (II, 27; letter 260).<sup>23</sup>

What most vexed him, especially during his last years, were the consequences which his infirmities could produce on his professional activities, since these sometimes kept him at home and only allowed him to direct the work on St Peter's construction site from a distance, using his collaborators as intermediaries, a thing which could produce serious failures:

... ond'io n'ò passione e non poca, perché sono i' maggior fatica e fastidio, circa la cose della fabrica ch'i' fussi mai; e questo è che nella volta della capella del re di Francia ... per esser vechio e non vi potere andare spesso, è natovi un certo errore che mi bisogna disfare gran parte di quel che v'era facto. (II, 176; letter 462)<sup>24</sup>

Michelangelo did not fear death more than illness. His firm faith, which made him consider death as a transition to a better world and a liberation from human miseries, allowed him to see death as a non-redoutable event. This Christian vision does not prevent him from painfully suffering from the death of his relatives, who were numerous, considering the old age of his death. These deaths inspired some deeply sorrowful letters, accompanied by the anxiety to know whether his dear ones had died as good Christians.

But it was the death of Vittoria Colonna, his spiritual friend, in 1547, and, later, that of his servant, collaborator and dear friend Urbino that brought from him the most heart-rending accents, accompanied by deep personal meditation. To his nephew Leonardo, he expressed, on January 4, 1556, his total dismay for this last loss:

Avisoti come iersera, a dì 3 di dicembre, a ore 4, passò di questa vita Francesco decto Urbino, con grandissimo mio affanno; e àmmi lasciato molto afficto e tribolato, tanto che mi sare' stato più dolce il morir con esso seco, per l'amor che io gli portavo ... onde a me pare essere ora restato per la morte sua senza vita, e non mi posso dar pace. (II, 158; letter 437)<sup>25</sup>

And two weeks later he entrusted the following meditation to Giorgio Vasari:

Voi sapete come Urbino è morto; di che m'è stato grandissima gratia di Dio, ma con grave mie danno e infinito dolore. La gratia è stata che, dove in vita mi teneva vivo, morendo m'ha insegnato morire non con dispiacere, ma con disidero della mo[r]te. (II, 159; letter 439).<sup>26</sup>

He appears to be waiting for death with peace of mind: 'Son vechio e qua duro gran fatica mal conosciuta; e fo per l'amor di Dio, e in quello spero e non in altro' (II, 187-188; letter 475).<sup>27</sup>

From that moment, death appears to him as 'a friend' to whom he tries to get accustomed. Thus, to Duke Cosimo I who encouraged him to come back to his homeland, he wrote: '... non mi resta a ffare altro poi che... tornarmi a Firenze con animo di riposarmi co la morte, con la quale di e nocte cerco di domesticarmi...'. (II, 176-177; letter 462).<sup>28</sup>

The evocation of his last hour at times takes on in his writings a certain poetic pregnancy (which happens rarely in his correspondence), suggesting an expressive and imaginative language: 'sono alle venti 4 ore e non nasce in me pensiero che non vi sia dentro sculpita la morte' (II, 153; letter 430).<sup>29</sup>

But the old titan will fight to the end; he will persist in directing, as we have seen, those working on the completion of St Peter's Basilica and negotiating, up to the last weeks of his life, with the exacting supervisors of the building site. The last letters which we possess deal mainly with the great architectural realisations which were added, at the end of his career, to the prestigious frescoes of the pontifical chapels.

Thus, Michelangelo's death in 1564 will coincide with the apogee of his Roman, Italian and European glory.

## 6. Conclusion

I wish to conclude this selective analysis of the contents of Michelangelo's letters with a general observation, by insisting again on the historical meaning of his *Correspondence*.

It was not possible to show here the copious and exactly documented witness of Florentine and Roman sixteenth-century micro-history offered by Michelangelo's letters. In addition, one of the great merits of Michelangelo as a writer is that, through his letters as well as through his poems, he appears to be, together with Piero della Francesca, Ghiberti, Leonardo, Cellini and Vasari, one of those who most contributed to 'l'entrée des artistes en l'écriture' (Lucas Fiorato, 1989, 67 ff.): an activity which was normally the prerogative of highly cultured literati and in which, before him, artists did not have a place. To this one should add a special peculiarity in literary history: as underlined by André Chastel, Michelangelo is 'le premier artiste don't on possède une importante correspondance' (1958, 130).

This is why, through his writings, both personal and collective, we can say that Michelangelo contributed to the republic of letters with an epistolographic monument which appears exceptional although arising from the experience of everyday life, as he lived it day by day.

<sup>1</sup> Writing 'is not my profession' (Fiorato, ed., 2010, I, 88; letter 99). This letter is addressed to his brother Buonarroto and was written on 16 June, 1515. All quotations from the letters are

taken from this edition and are followed, in parenthesis, by vol. number, page and number of letter as given in it.

<sup>2</sup>For this copious display of information, see my 'Introduction' in Fiorato, ed., 2010, vol. I, xi-cxxv.

<sup>3</sup>'I do not think that in Florence families have lasted if not thanks to their estates'. To his nephew Leonardo, 15 October 1547.

<sup>4</sup>'On the question of buying a house, I repeat what I said, that is, that you should try to buy an honourable house, worth one thousand or one thousand and five hundred *scudi*, and, if possible, located in our area... I say this because an honourable house in the city gives you great honour, because it is more visible than are estates and because we are descended from a most noble stock. I have always striven to restore our house, but my brothers have not matched up with the task'. To his nephew Leonardo, 4 December 1546.

<sup>5</sup>'I tell you again that I do not like that, out of avarice, one compromises oneself with people of much lower condition than we are'. To his father Lodovico, early April 1512.

<sup>6</sup>'... that Gismondo comes back to live in Florence, so that here [in Rome] one does not say any more that I have a brother who in Settignano walks behind the oxen'. To Bartolomeo [Ferratino], end of 1546 or beginning of 1547.

<sup>7</sup>'... I have been toiling all over Italy for the last twelve years, suffering all disgraces, enduring privation, tearing my body in every hardship, put my life in a thousand perils only to help my family; and, now that I started to relieve it a little, only you are the one who messes up and spoils in one hour what I have done in so many years and with so much toil'. To his brother Giovan Simone, between July and August 1509.

<sup>8</sup>'... to leave aside all these quarrels which require more time than to make figures'; 'one should say many things, which have no longer been said, of such disciplines; but, as I said, it would take too much time, and I have little because I not only am old, but almost count myself among the dead'. To Benedetto Varchi, between April and June 1547.

<sup>9</sup>'... this is why it is certain that the limbs of architecture come from the limbs of man. Those who have not been, or are not, good masters of figures, and especially of anatomy, cannot be proficient in it'. To cardinal Rodolfo Pio from Carpi (?), 1557-1560 (?).

<sup>10</sup>'My joy is melancholy, / and my tranquillity are these discomforts'.

<sup>11</sup>'From these in one moment there were born the chance, destiny and fortune of each of us; and to me they bestowed dark time, which I resembled at birth and in the cradle'.

<sup>12</sup>By 'capitolo' is meant a series of short stanzas in terza rima, usually of a burlesque character.

<sup>13</sup>'I am imprisoned as is the marrow / in its case, and poor, and lonely, / as a spirit imprisoned in a phial'.

<sup>14</sup>'I live here in great anguish and with great bodily effort, and have no friends at all; nor do I want to have; neither have I time enough to eat as I need'. To his brother Buonarroto, 17 November 1509 (?).

<sup>15</sup>'I have not taken my pension since more than one year and I strive with poverty; I am utterly alone facing annoyances and I have so many that they take much more time than does my art'. To Giovan Francesco Fattucci, 24 October 1525.

<sup>16</sup>'I know nothing, and I associate with no one'. To his nephew Leonardo, 22 August 1550.

<sup>17</sup>'I can neither live nor paint'. To Luigi del Riccio, October-November 1542.

<sup>18</sup>'I have very few acquaintances in Rome... and if I ask something from these people, for each one they will ask me a thousand. And therefore I must associate with few'. To his nephew Leonardo, 18 January 1549.

<sup>19</sup>'Your friend captain Chuio and some other gentlemen were so kind as to invite me to dine out with them, and I was very pleased about this, because for a short time I abandoned my melancholy, not to say my madness'. To Sebastiano del Piombo, May 1525.

<sup>20</sup>To his nephew Leonardo, 4 July 1556.

<sup>21</sup> 'since I am old, I do not think that to waste time only to make the pope save two hundred or three hundred ducats would be worth while'. To Domenico Buoninsegni, 2 May 1517.

<sup>22</sup> 'I have many engagements and am old and in ill health, so that if I work one day I have to rest four'. To Bartolomeo Angelini, 18 (?) April 1523.

<sup>23</sup> 'I have recovered and hope to live some more time, for heaven has entrusted my health to the hands of maestro Baccio and to good vine trebbiano of the Olivieri'. To Luigi del Riccio, between end of July and beginning of August 1544.

<sup>24</sup> 'I am greatly anguished, for I have more exertion and tribulations regarding the construction site than I ever had; and the reason is that in the vault of the king of France's chapel... since I am old and cannot go there frequently, a certain mistake appeared and so I have to undo a great part of what I had done'. To Duke Cosimo de' Medici, before 22 May 1557.

<sup>25</sup> 'I wish to inform you that last night at four o'clock Francesco, called Urbino, passed away, to my great grief, this left me much afflicted and tormented, so much that it would have been sweeter to die with him, for the love I bore him... and so it seems to me that I have remained lifeless after his death and cannot take comfort'. To his nephew Leonardo, 4 January 1556.

<sup>26</sup> 'You know that Urbino died, which has been for me a great grace from God, but also a heavy harm and an infinite pain. The grace was that, while in life he kept me alive, dying he taught me how to die, not with displeasure but with longing for death'. To Giorgio Vasari, 23 February 1556.

<sup>27</sup> 'I am old and here I work very hard unacknowledged; and I do it for God's sake, and in that and only in that I trust'. To his nephew Leonardo, 2 December 1558.

<sup>28</sup> '... it only remains to me... to come back to Florence with intent to rest there in death, with whom day and night I try to become acquainted'. To Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, before 22 May 1557.

<sup>29</sup> 'I have reached my twenty fourth hour, and no thought is born in me but death is sculpted in it'. To Giorgio Vasari, 22 June 1555.

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# The Condition of the Lyon Weavers in the Letters to Louis XV and Monseigneur Poulletier (1731 and 1732)

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## *Abstract*

On 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1731, an ordinance of Louis XV, King of France, imposed separation between the production and sale activities of the weavers of 'gold, silver and silk' at the famous Lyon Manufactory in which hundreds of families worked. The ordinance plunged into despair the workers (*maîtres ouvriers*) who, up till then, for centuries, had been allowed to sell their goods freely and were now in danger of being reduced to poverty by a handful of traffickers who knew nothing about their extremely sophisticated, skilful trade, but would be enabled to capitalize on their work. They therefore addressed two petitions (the first in 1731 and the second in 1732) to the King and Monseigneur Poulletier, the King's Superintendent and the Manufactory's Overseer, asking for the abrogation of the ordinance and a revision of the Manufactory's regulations. The interesting aspect of these two petitions is that they show the workers' consciousness of their rights; indeed, their denunciation of these abuses foretells, a century before, the two important revolts of the *canuts* (as the Lyon textile workers were known) which were to break out in 1831 and 1834.

*Keywords:* Lyon, Revolt, Royal Ordinance, Weavers' Letters

## 1. *A Story with a Long History*

The revolts of people working in the textile manufacturing trade have a long history, interspersed with hard and often bloody struggles; the grounds of these struggles were always miserable working conditions, extremely low wages and speculation on the part of unscrupulous 'entrepreneurial' groups. Some of these struggles ended up with some success; but most of the time gains were repealed or frustrated owing to contrasting prevailing interests. One example is the revolt of the *ciompi* (i.e. wool-carders) which took place in Florence in 1378. The *ciompi* had started their fight to claim the right of representation and association and, on that occasion, too, the small concessions which had been granted were soon cancelled by the oligarchy of the merchants' guild. However, the fact that stories of revolt against the exploitation of the labour-force recur throughout the centuries is a sign of a slowly expanding pattern: strife after strife, claim after

claim, the feeling of belonging to a community grew. The practice of mutual aid, consciousness of people's dignity and work and awareness of rights were strengthened: in short, these struggles led up to what in the nineteenth century was going to be the birth of the trades union movement.

One example of this is the story of the renowned Lyon Manufactory of gold, silver and silk, an enterprise which started to develop during the sixteenth century under the patronage of Francis I, who successfully placed his highly prized fabrics in all European courts and high ecclesiastical environments, but who was also aware of the ordeal suffered by his workers bound to the handloom, at which whole families, wage-workers and apprentices spent their lives, barely earning their living. How complex and important the economic enterprise of the weaving of rich fabric was for the Lyon area is shown by the number of people employed in this trade: more than 20,000 in the decades we are dealing with, considering the various special skills and linked activities (out of a total population of about 120,000 inhabitants); and how many problems there were connected with this activity is revealed by the conspicuous official correspondence exchanged with the Paris court: supplications, *doléances*, and – on the King's part – decrees, verdicts, ordinances, to which further supplications, etc., were sent in reply.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the centuries the topics of these letters vary: from the cost of labour to the prices of wares and problems connected with the circulation of goods.<sup>2</sup>

I intend to examine two petitions in particular (written in 1731 and 1732), *Au Roy et à Nosseigneurs de son Conseil* (the King is Louis XV) and *À l'Intendant de la Généralité de Lyon* (a sort of royal official, a government prefect)<sup>3</sup> because the topic they deal with was new and because it would be an important step in the following years both for social history in general and the workers' movement in particular.

These texts can be considered 'letters' to all intents and purposes; they can be included in the typology of public and official letters, even though the one addressed to the *Intendant* is formally a *placet*<sup>4</sup> and the one addressed to the King, although not headed so, is a traditional supplication. The two texts under examination have the formal status of letters: a sender, a deferred message, an absent addressee, writing strategies which are characteristic of the genre, and a linguistic register which is 'adapted' to the addressee. The structure is the customary one of a supplication to the King or authorities: an initial apostrophe and a concluding promise by the supplicants to pray for the well-being of the addressee and his/her family. The pattern thus follows traditional rhetoric, i.e. *exordium*, *narratio*, *argumentatio*, and *peroratio*. Although, as we shall see, the contents of the *lettres/requêtes* show increasing awareness of their social role on the part of the workers making the request, the King is still addressed by 'suppliants': the *Ancien Régime* had not updated the system of justice for centuries and, above all, jealously preserved the power hierarchy in society. However, when it came to requests for pardon<sup>5</sup> and demands, the deferential tone was lowered. Of the two letters discussed here, each one admittedly has a single sender/signatory, but both of them were compiled in the name of a group of applicants. From the fifteenth century onwards, beginning

with the well-known 'ordonnance cabochienne', which stated that all requests to the King had to be made in writing, the 'maîtres des requêtes' came to the fore as indispensable intermediaries: 'Techniciens de l'écriture, habiles en parole, juristes souvent avertis, il contribuèrent à la réglementation de la procédure par requête qui tendit à prendre de plus en plus, la forme écrite'.<sup>6</sup> The task of these mediators was obviously that of facilitating an official, ritualized form of communication, but also that of representing hierarchical mediation.

But now let us examine the two letters and the social context in which they were drawn up. During the initial decades of the eighteenth century, the Lyon factories were staffed by *maîtres ouvriers* (skilled workers; later on I will explain the difference between *maîtres ouvriers & marchands* and *maîtres ouvriers à façon*), *compagnons*<sup>7</sup> and *apprentis* (apprentices). The Manufactory, even though by the end of the previous century it had suffered from the repeal of the edict of Nantes,<sup>8</sup> whose consequence was that the best craftsmen had fled to other countries, was, in these years, particularly flourishing and was going through one of the brightest periods in its history for the high quality of its products, the avant-garde nature of its techniques and its commercial expansion. There were about 9,000 *maîtres ouvriers*, but, as I said, the subsidiary activities employed about 20,000 people. It was precisely at that moment that, on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1731, a decree (*arrêt*) by the King imposed a clear cut separation of roles between traders and workers, establishing that the option for one of the two functions should be made within a month. The *maîtres ouvriers & marchands* (which we would call 'craftsmen') who up till that moment had been authorized to sell the wares they produced would no longer be allowed to commercialize these products, but would have to entrust their goods to a few powerful merchants – the same people from whom they bought their raw materials – who would put them on the market; thus, the supremacy/dominance of capital over labour, of commerce over production and the shop over the workroom was affirmed. The reaction of the workers who asked for the immediate repeal of the decree was soon heard. Only in 1737 would they obtain its partial revision, which was subsequently cancelled by a new royal decree which was to confirm that of 1731 and provoke a huge rising of the whole corporation of weavers (to all intents and purposes a real strike), following which two 'seditious' workers were hanged.<sup>9</sup>

This introduction serves to stress the importance of these two letters which have never been mentioned by the historians of the movement of the *canuts*,<sup>10</sup> who have mainly been interested in workers' history starting in the nineteenth century. However, these are the first letters which, in the rich *corpus* of petitions and supplications sent to people in power, raise the problem of the economic relationship among corporations (but we will see that the idea of class, too, is present in these requests) and challenge the privilege of those who, thanks to their financial resources, would be able

to capitalize on the work of other people, at the expense of those who had spent physical effort, intelligence, high skill and traditional craftsmanship on the production of these goods.

## 2. *The Supplication to the King*

The supplication to Louis XV opens with the address to the King and the introduction of the petitioners:

Sire,

Les Maîtres Ouvriers, & Marchands d'Etoffes d'Or, d'Argent, & de Soye, de la Ville de Lyon, REMONTRENT très humblement à VOSTRE MAJESTÉ<sup>11</sup> que l'Arrêt qu'Elle a rendu dans son Conseil le 8 May dernier entraîneroit, s'il était executé, la ruine totale de leur Commerce. (*Au Roy...* 1731, 1)<sup>12</sup>

If, on the one hand, formal deference for the highest authority is granted by graphic emphasis and adverbs like *humblement*, on the other stress on the fact that the letter is a complaint (*REMONTRENT*) foretells the tone of the petition.

The undersigned proceed by quoting extracts from the decree, followed by their confutations, and thus explain that the royal injunction to opt, within a month, for either the role of merchant or that of worker would mean their ruin: the first option would limit the possibility of continuing with production and require an initial economic investment that none of them could afford; the second would force them to yield their products to people who would decide on their worth and price. It is with pride that the pleaders (who can be reckoned to be about 750 *maîtres ouvriers & marchands* in number, to whom should be added about 8,000 *maîtres ouvriers à façon*),<sup>13</sup> recall how much effort they spent to acquire the skills which were the pride of the Lyon Manufactories: five years of work as apprentices and five more as *compagnons* which were in danger of being frustrated by the unscrupulous initiative of a small oligarchy of merchants who had influenced the King's judgement:

quelques Marchands, qui n'exercent plus la Profession d'Ouvriers, ébloüis par leur fortune, ont crû qu'ils étoient en droit de donner des Loix à leur Communauté. Leur ambition démesurée leur a suggéré le moyen de s'approprier tout le profit des Manufactures, & de ne laisser aux Maîtres Ouvriers que ce qui peut à peine aider à les faire subsister. (*Au Roy...* 1731, 4)<sup>14</sup>

The confrontation between the parties is uneven and the iniquity of the matter cannot but raise resentment:

On accorde au Marchand en ne faisant rien, le droit de profiter du travail d'autrui: en donnant à l'Ouvrier la liberté de travailler, on luy ravit le prix de son travail; Quel parallèle! n'est-il pas infiniment humiliant pour l'Ouvrier, tandis qu'il est très-glorieux pour le Marchand dont il satisfait tout-à-la fois la paresse, & l'ambition? (*Au Roy...* 1731, 6)<sup>15</sup>

As one can see, the issue of the misappropriation of the fruits of other people's work, which was to be challenged by socialism and the nineteenth-century workers' movement is already strongly present here; and the analysis of its consequences is already clear: if workers were deprived of property of their goods, they would end up by no longer engaging their skills in the production of goods, their pride would be humiliated and their creativity quenched:

On éteint dans eux toute l'émulation qu'ils pourroient avoir pour se distinguer par leurs Ouvrages; dès qu'ils n'espereront plus de pousser leur fortune, non seulement ils n'imagineront plus rien, mais ils ne seront point excitez à faire les efforts necessaires pour soutenir la perfection où ils ont porté leurs Fabriques. On sçait que nulle autre Fabrique, soit dans le Royaume, soit dans le País Etranger, n'approche de la leur. (*Au Roy...* 1731, 6)<sup>16</sup>

The greedy merchants, who mistook 'le bien d'autrui... avec le leur' had also determined, with the speculative rise of prices, the bankruptcy which afflicted many commercial enterprises in Paris:

Faut-il chercher une autre cause des Banqueroutes qui désolent la Capitale du Royaume que le prix excessif auquel les Marchands de Lyon ont vendu leurs Etoffes aux Marchands de Paris? Cette cherté se prouve par les Factures des plus célèbres Détailliers de cette ville ... Ces Marchands ambitieux ne se proposent ... que d'élever une fortune immense sur la ruine totale de leur Corps, & aux dépens du Public ... Il leur importe peu que tout le Commerce perisse pourvû que leur avidité soir satisfaite. (*Au Roy...* 1731, 7-8)<sup>17</sup>

The crisis which was to follow the enforcement of the royal decree for the Lyon industry would induce the workers to emigrate. The sad expectation of exodus was linked to a strong feeling of rebellion against those who were trying to subordinate their destinies to economic interests:

L'amour de la Patrie, quelque violent qu'il soit dans le cœur, cede à la cruelle nécessité, lorsqu'elle nous menace, & nous talonne; la seule idée de gémir dans l'esclavage d'un petit nombre de Marchands, est une idée insupportable. (9)<sup>18</sup>

The closure displays the usual traditional form of the petition, asking for the repeal of the decree of 8<sup>th</sup> May. The fact is obviously emphasized that the King is absolutely blameless and unaware of the events, while his magnanimity which makes him the worthy heir of the great Louis XIV is pointed out. Maître Chappe de Ligny, lawyer and signer, pledges that the persons he is acting for, if their requests were to be granted, would reciprocate with a thankful and devoted thought: 'Ils continueront de faire des Vœux pour la santé & la prospérité de VOTRE MAJESTÉ'.<sup>19</sup>

The valedictory formula could not have been more respectful of tradition; already in the Middle Ages, the supplication to a powerful man ended with the pledge to pray for him and his dear ones.<sup>20</sup> Although centuries have elapsed,

the *Ancien Régime* is still firm; the king is still beyond dispute (as he would be until the 1790s). However, in the text there emerge reasons of discontent which are similar to those which were present throughout the country and which, in the second half of the century, would fuel the Revolution: workers' poverty, dissatisfaction of the petty bourgeoisie, and the abuses of the powerful who act as intermediaries between the king and the population.

### 3. *The 'Placet' to Monseigneur Poulletier*

But even more extraordinarily anticipatory, both in its contents and modality of exposition, is the second letter I am going to examine: the *Placet* addressed to Monseigneur Poulletier, the King's Intendant in Lyon. Poulletier is 'le Conservateur de la première Manufacture de l'Europe, & le protecteur de dix mille Maitres qui en soutiennent tout le poid par un travail assidu' (*Placet... 1732, 39*).<sup>21</sup> The letter is addressed to him, in an autonomous form, by the large community of the *mâtres ouvriers à façon*: those we would call 'true workers', that is, skilled craftsmen who offer their manpower without implications concerning the sale of the finished product which, until the promulgation of the decree, was a prerogative of the *mâtres ouvriers & marchands* up to the decree requiring the option.

It was the month of December, 1732; a year had elapsed since the injunction and the conflict between the parties had made working conditions harder, while orders had decreased. If the incipit ('à votre GRANDEUR...') and the closure respect the courtesy formulas which befit a subordinate sender (the usual wishes for prosperity and health), the tone becomes harder, the analysis more lucid and the attack more explicit. In the first place, the signatories, who are represented by Roger l'aîné, enunciator and signer of the letter, call themselves no longer *suppliants*, but *opposants* to a decree which only benefits 'un très-petit nombre de Marchands enrichis par la main de l'Ouvrier, qui cherchent à satisfaire leur esprit de nomination & d'avarice' (*Placet... 1732, 4*).<sup>22</sup> A new and, in my opinion, remarkable element is that the contest is already defined as a 'class conflict': the hard-working class of the *mâtres ouvriers & marchands* and that of the *mâtres ouvriers à façon* are acknowledged as legitimate, while the birth of a spurious third class is attacked:

Cet abus vient de ce que quelques-uns des Ouvriers Marchands ayant fait des fortunes rapides ont dédaigné même le nom d'Ouvrier, ils ont quitté la main d'œuvre & ont formé une troisième classe sous le nom de Marchands. Ils se sont emparé des Titres, Comptes & Registres de la Communauté. (*Placet... 1732, 4*)<sup>23</sup>

The outcome, which was going to entail the mortification of all competition and the 'theft' of others people's work, would be ruinous:

L'ignorance du Marchand n'est pas le seul inconvénient qui soit à craindre dans l'exécution de l'Arrêt du 8 de May: l'on détruit un concurrent qui l'excite & l'anime...

L'émulation cessera également dans le Maître-Ouvrier, privé sans retour d'un droit commun à toutes le Manufactures & que les lois naturelles donnent d'être le Marchand de l'ouvrage de ses mains. (*Placet...* 1732, 5)<sup>24</sup>

So much more since the adversary is trying to reduce the number of those who hold the profit and increase the number of those who work at his service in order to lower work costs and increase that of the end products:

Le projet des instigateurs de l'Arrêt du 8 de May est de diminuer le nombre des Marchands & d'augmenter le nombre des ouvriers; la fin qu'ils se proposent est de mettre à rien le prix des façons & et d'en enrichir les Etoffes. (*Placet...* 1732, 6)<sup>25</sup>

An analysis of extraordinary modernity is that devoted to the unscrupulous logic of capital: those who possess it, out of sheer speculation, are often interested in undermining the production of material goods; on the contrary, the small entrepreneur (in this case the *maître-ouvrier & marchand*) encourages a collective kind of economy (one might say: finance versus economy):

L'expérience a fait connoître que plus il y a d'Ouvriers Marchands moins on doit craindre la cessation du travail; le riche Marchand uniquement occupé du soin d'amasser de gros biens ne sçait pas se contenter d'un petit profit, il peut suspendre la vente de ses Etoffes, il trouve son avantage à faire cesser le travail pour vendre plus cherement: l'Ouvrier-Marchand ignore cette ruse du Commerçant & ne peut la mettre en usage; il a besoin de vendre & de vendre continuellement. (*Placet...* 1732, 7)<sup>26</sup>

The *placet*, to which a detailed proposal for the reform of the Manufactory's Charter is attached, closes with the invitation to Monseigneur to take cognizance of the problem exposed and intercede in order to re-establish justice:

il s'agit non seulement de conserver dans la tranquillité dix mille familles qui seroient troublées par l'exécution de l'Arrêt du 8 de May 1731; mais encore de tirer ces familles de l'oppression dans laquelle les Marchands les tiennent depuis trente ans: en admettant les Status qui sont proposés, les véritables abus qui sont dans la fabrique cesseroient. (*Placet...* 1732, 38)<sup>27</sup>

Although the appeal to the authority of the Superintendent is inevitable, the supplication has become an explicit accusation and the solution of the problems is no longer entrusted to the addressee's magnanimity, but rather to the introduction of the corrective norms suggested by the workers as a group.

#### 4. *Towards the New Century: the Revolts of the 'Canuts'*

By this time, the story of the revolution of the Lyon workers is under way: in 1744, as I have said, the most eventful uprising of the *Ancien Régime* was to break out;<sup>28</sup> on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1786, a *revolte* took place known as 'l'émeute

des deux sous' (the tuppenny revolt), from the paltry rate which craftsmen were able to obtain from traders for the purchase of their goods. During the nineteenth century, weavers still lived in poverty: the economy of the Manufactory gave work to the whole city (it has been calculated that there were about 30,000 looms in workers' homes); work was hard: all, men, women and children slaved away tirelessly, but the earnings were meagre because trading of goods was still in the hands of a few speculators. In 1831 and 1834, the first important risings of the workers' movement broke out in Lyon. In November, 1831, the whole city, to the watchword 'vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant',<sup>29</sup> rose in revolt against oppression and social injustice; for a few days, the citizens of Lyon, after chasing the army and the prefect's authorities out, autonomously administered the city: at the time meetings increased, certain forms of cooperation and the practice of mutual aid were strengthened, voluntary subscriptions for the families of those who had been wounded or had died were organized; but the experience would not last long: Louis-Philippe made an impressive show of force and repression hit the city. The few benefits which had been obtained were dissolved. In the month of April, 1834, another big rising of the workers/craftsmen against low pay imposed by traders took place; again thousands of labourers poured onto the streets, again barricades were erected, during what would be called the 'semaine sanglante' (the bloody week): more than 600 civilians died and 10,000 insurgents were tried and sentenced either to transportation or long periods of detention. More risings took place in 1848 and 1849: the claim was again for fairer salaries and more humane working conditions.

Although the Paris population, too, rose in those years (the 'trois glorieuses' days against the restoration monarchy of Charles X took place in 1830), the struggles of the Lyon workers of 1831 and 1834 would resound throughout Europe, surprise the liberals, thrill the socialists, and be considered (as they still are today) the first forms of proletarian revolt.<sup>30</sup> They would be an example for the workers' movement (even for the extremely important rising which took place in England, where in those years the trades union movement was consolidating its strength): they would be an example of organization, demand and proposition. The experience of self-rule carried through by the citizens of Lyon would inspire that of the Paris *Commune* in 1871 (it, too, was to have its 'semaine sanglante').

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Jean Jaurès, who edited an imposing *Histoire socialiste*, decided that a whole chapter of this work should be devoted to the Lyon insurrection. Eugène Fournière, who wrote that chapter, said that it was 'une insurrection imprévue [qui] fit apparaître dans l'histoire un élément révolutionnaire qui n'en devait plus sortir désormais':

Paris se soulevait pour conquérir la liberté et l'apporter aux peuples. Lyon s'insurgeait pour donner au peuple souverain le premier et indispensable attribut de la souverai-

neté: le pain quotidien... Certes, ce n'est pas une nouveauté dans l'histoire que des ouvriers se soulèvent parce que le salaire ne leur permet plus de vivre. Mais ce qui est nouveau, c'est qu'un tel soulèvement se produise dans un milieu social où l'on achève de détruire les derniers restes des rapports féodaux et où s'assoit la domination d'une seule classe, qui tient son pouvoir et sa richesse de la vente des produits du travail. Ce soulèvement pose la question des droits du producteur.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the myth of the *canuts*, which is still living, was born. This myth is represented, among other things, by the well-known song of protest 'Les canuts',<sup>32</sup> which has been given modern renderings and interpretations. The Lyon labour movement has been an object of interest for scholars who study nineteenth-century social history, but the barely explored eighteenth-century documents still have much to say about it. The petitions which have been examined here were to be followed by others,<sup>33</sup> but these are the first and they have been ignored by scholars, although they represent an extraordinary piece of evidence about the extremely lucid way in which the ideas of class and profit and the issues of labour exploitation were posited, one century before the well-known nineteenth-century risings. 'Written' dissension would find, in the nineteenth century, more independent forms of expression: the workers' print, whose first specimen was *L'Écho de la Fabrique*, would appear precisely in Lyon during the 1831 risings; but if we want to fully understand the course of events, we must also examine – as I have been trying to do here – the humble entreaties to the powerful, which constitute the fire simmering under the ashes. In my view, a study of these entreaties is a task worth pursuing.

<sup>1</sup> For the years under analysis the ordinances of the Kings of France are collected in De Laurière *et al.*, eds (1723-1849).

<sup>2</sup> I wish to quote the extremely topical supplication to the King (*Au Roy...* 1701), in which the Lyon weavers of silk, gold and silver fabric complain about the competition of India which, they argue, exports to Europe (Holland and England in particular) less qualified wares which endanger French industry. The advice they give to the King is that of stopping all imports to France, a measure which would convince the rest of Europe not to buy such goods which were not considered 'fashionable' in France.

<sup>3</sup> In those years, the 'Intendant de la Généralité de Lyon' was Pierre Poulletier (1680-1765), Lord of Nainville and of La Salle.

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the Latin etymology, *placet* means, in the juridical sense of the word, an assent granted by Authority, either civil or ecclesiastical; it also defines, in this sense, which is now obsolete, a message addressed to a person in power to ask for an act of justice or obtain pardon or favour.

<sup>5</sup> Pleas for pardon, especially by those convicted of a crime, were presented in the form of *lettres de rémission* (letters setting out the facts written by a royal notary, so that the court of justice could ratify them and the King exercise clemency). On this type of letter see Natalie Zemon Davis (1987). The practice continued in the eighteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> 'Writing technicians, skilled in wording, often expert jurists, they contributed to the regulation of the request procedure which tended more and more to take the written form' (Mattéoni 2003,

288). In the eighteenth century, those who held the office of *maîtres des requêtes* often came from the judiciary. They were administrative officials, members of the King's Privy Council, in which their task was to report on the supplications and requests which had been addressed to the King (see also <<http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/maitre-des-requetes/>>, accessed 9 May 2013). Here and in the following footnotes translations are editorial.

<sup>7</sup>We could call *compagnons* 'skilled workers' working under craftsmen, who had looms in their homes. It is important to recall that sixteenth-century France had already seen the development of the *compagnonnage*, a confraternity of workers under craftsmen in various manufacturing activities. Their purpose was solidarity and mutual aid. These corporations, seen as signs of privilege, were abolished during the French Revolution, only to return in the nineteenth century in the guise of mutual aid societies for the defence of workers' rights. On *compagnonnage* in the *Ancien Régime* and its development in the social history of the nineteenth century see Sewell (1980).

<sup>8</sup>The Edict of Nantes, promulgated by Henry IV in 1598, granted freedom of worship to Protestants. Following its repeal in 1685, under Louis XIV, thousands of Huguenots – especially craftsmen and members of the bourgeoisie – were obliged to go into exile. As a consequence of their expatriation the country's economy was weakened.

<sup>9</sup>It would be impossible to quote specific relevant sources because there is an immense bibliography on the history of the workers' movement in Lyon; particularly interesting are the materials kept in the archives of the Lyon municipal Library. As regards the eighteenth century I will only quote Bayard 1997.

<sup>10</sup>This term does not appear, at least in written texts, before the nineteenth century. According to some sources, *canut* is a contraction of *cannes nues*, with reference to the workers' walking sticks, which were not as finely decorated as those of the rich. According to more reliable sources the word is connected to the *canne* or *cannette*, i.e. the spool which was used to weave the fabric. The female version of *canut* is *canuse*. An essay devoted to women's work in the weaving trade is Budin 2002.

<sup>11</sup>I have kept the upper and lower case letters in the original text.

<sup>12</sup>'Sir, the Master Workers & Merchants of fabrics in Gold, Silver & Silk of the city of Lyon very humbly complain to YOUR MAJESTY that the decree you have approved on 8<sup>th</sup> May last past in your Council would result, if executed, in the total ruin of their trade.'

<sup>13</sup>The *Maitres-Ouvriers à façon* were workers who were commissioned to place their manpower under the supervision of the *Maitres-Ouvriers & Marchands* who also provided the thread for weaving. In the conflict with the *maarchands* they were united with all the other workers.

<sup>14</sup>'some Merchants who no longer practise the Profession of Workers, dazzled by their fortune, have believed that they had the right to establish Laws for the Community. Their boundless ambition has suggested to them the means through which they could take possession of all the profits of the Farms, and leave to the *Maitres Ouvriers* only what serves for their bare subsistence.'

<sup>15</sup>'The Merchant, who does nothing, is allowed to profit from other people's work: on the other hand, while workers are given liberty to work, they are deprived of the profit of their work. What a difference! Is this not terribly humiliating for Workers, while it is enhancing for the Merchants, whose idleness and ambition are at the same time satisfied?'

<sup>16</sup>'In them, the sense of emulation which they could feel in order to distinguish themselves through their work will be extinguished; if they lose all hope to increase their fortune they will not only cease to invent, but will also be discouraged to make the necessary efforts to keep up the perfection which they have achieved in the quality of their products. It is well known that no other cloth production, either in the kingdom or in other countries, can be compared to theirs.'

<sup>17</sup>'Is it necessary to seek for a cause of the bankruptcies which devastate the Capital of the Realm other than the excessive price at which the Lyon Merchants have sold their fabrics to the Paris Merchants? Such a high cost is proved by the receipts of the most famous shop-owners in the city... These ambitious Merchants only aim... at making a large fortune on the total ruin of their Corporation, and at the expense of the Public... They little care about the death of the whole commercial enterprise, provided that their greed be satisfied.'

<sup>18</sup> ‘Love for one’s country, however intense it can be in one’s heart, withdraws before cruel necessity, when necessity threatens and chases us; the mere idea of suffering, slaves to a small number of Merchants, is unbearable.’

<sup>19</sup> ‘They will continue to pray for the health and prosperity of YOUR MAJESTY.’

<sup>20</sup> On the rituality of this final wishing formula, see Mattéoni 2003, 296.

<sup>21</sup> ‘the Overseer of the first Manufacturing Firm of Europe, and the protector of the ten thousand Masters who hold all its weight with their daily work.’

<sup>22</sup> ‘a very small number of Merchants who have been enriched by the Workers’ hands, who try to satisfy their spirit of domination and avarice.’

<sup>23</sup> ‘This abuse derives from the fact that certain *Ouvriers Marchands*, having made quick fortunes, have even rejected the name of Worker, have abandoned manpower and have constituted a third class under the name of Merchants. They appropriated the Titles, the Accounts and the Registers of the Community.’

<sup>24</sup> ‘The ignorance of the Merchants is not the only inconvenience which should be feared as concerns the enforcement of the *Arrêt* of 8<sup>th</sup> May: the Merchants are no longer subjected to stimulating competition. In the *Maitres-Ouvriers*, too, emulation will be extinguished, for they will be for ever deprived of a right which is common to all Manufacturing firms and which, according to the laws of nature, legitimates the trading of one’s own handiwork.’

<sup>25</sup> ‘The project of those who prompted the *Arrêt* of 8<sup>th</sup> May is to reduce the number of Merchants and increase the number of workers; the end they are envisaging is a drastic reduction of the cost of manpower and an increase in the price of cloth.’

<sup>26</sup> ‘Experience has shown that the more there are of Merchant Workers, the less the discontinuance of work is to be feared; the rich Merchant, only interested in hoarding great riches is not content with a small profit, he can suspend the sale of the Fabrics, because he finds an advantage in discontinuing the work in order to sell at a higher price: the *Ouvrier Marchand* ignores this stratagem which is proper to the dealer and cannot put it into practice; he needs selling and selling all the time.’

<sup>27</sup> ‘it is not only a question of granting the serenity of ten thousand families that would be unsettled by the enforcement of the *Arrêt* of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1731; but also to draw these families out of the oppression in which the Merchants have been keeping them for the last thirty years: by admitting the regulations which have been proposed, the real abuses which are in the firm are going to end.’

<sup>28</sup> ‘The cause which prompted the revolt would also be the introduction of the power loom invented by Jacques de Vaucanson, which risked reducing the number of hand workers; another blow in this direction would be the invention, a century later, of the Jacquard loom. On the 1744 rising and on Vaucanson’s innovation, see Serre 2009. Also in England, starting from the end of the eighteenth century, mechanical looms began to be smashed by the workers who feared the threat to their jobs. Luddism, a protest movement which theorized and practised the sabotage of machines, developed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, among textile workers.’

<sup>29</sup> ‘To live working or die fighting.’

<sup>30</sup> The best-known historian of the Lyon risings is Fernand Rude. Two of his fundamental works are especially important: Rude 1977 and 2007 (1982). On the organization of textile craftsmanship during the nineteenth century, see also Sheridan 1979.

<sup>31</sup> ‘an unforeseen insurrection which caused a revolutionary element which would never disappear from history to appear’: ‘Paris was revolting to conquer liberty and to hand it to all the peoples. Lyon revolted to give to the sovereign people the first indispensable attribution of sovereignty: daily bread... It is certainly not a novelty in history that workers rise because their salary does no longer allow them to make their living. But what is new is the fact that such an insurrection takes place in the social context in which the last remains of feudal relationships have just been dismantled and in which the dominion of one sole class which gains its power from trading the products of work is consolidating. Such insurrection poses the issue of the producers’ rights’. See Fournière (n.d.) in Jaurés, ed. (1900-1908), VIII, 142.

<sup>32</sup> The song was composed in 1894 by Aristide Bruant.

<sup>33</sup> That of 1789 is worth quoting for the particular historical circumstances in which it was written. A new edition, with a full introduction, is Rude 1977.

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# Addressing the Addressee: Shakespeare and Early Modern Epistolary Theory

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## *Abstract*

Considering the emergence of epistolary theory in mid-sixteenth-century England, its value and function, the article attempts to show how these theories helped to construct, in contemporary correspondence, the addressee's identity. One of the most important precepts was, as Angel Day states in his manual *The English Secreterie*, that, when composing a letter, writers tailored their text to the addressee. Even invented letters in Shakespeare's plays reveal that, while correctly addressing the addressee does not necessarily guarantee success, address was considered the most important tool at the writer's disposal when attempting to secure the addressee's good will. Importantly, the observance of this precept even in drama indicates that epistolary theory had a more pervasive influence in early modern England than previously thought.

*Keywords:* Early Modern Drama, Epistolary Theory, Letter Writing, Shakespeare

## 1. *Introduction*

*Julia:* And is the paper nothing?  
*Lucetta:* Nothing concerning me.  
(*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 1.2, 73-74)

The paper is certainly something. If the paper, a letter from her lover, had been nothing, Julia would have walked away after tearing it. If it had been nothing, she would have left her tailor-made puzzle in pieces. As it happened, she gathered the fragments in an attempt to recompose the letter. She asked the wind to 'blow not a word away / Till I have found each letter in this letter' (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1.2, 119-120),<sup>1</sup> knowing that the meaning of the message would be altered if constructed improperly. She managed to organize each section, including the pieces with 'To Julia', 'To the sweet Julia' and 'Poor forlorn Proteus', fold them, and afterward seal the bundle with a kiss rather than wax (1.2, 119-120).

This letter-tearing scene in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is striking indeed. The letter's deconstruction and overt reconstruction call attention to the presence of epistolary theory on stage. After tearing the letter, Julia considered its individual pieces. The section that she read with 'To the sweet Julia' for instance is the message's salutation, a property of a letter whose everyday use

was guided by pedagogical texts and letter writing manuals of the day. By dramatizing a salutation or subscription, Shakespeare drew the epistolary theory of these texts onto the stage. Indeed, this attention to epistolary detail is characteristic of his plays. In *Twelfth Night*, for instance, Malvolio lingers over each element of the message, imploring, 'By your leave, wax – soft, and the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal – 'tis my lady' (2.5, 90-92). Similarly, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Boyet scrutinizes Don Armado's letter, focusing on the subscription and signature: 'Thine in the dearest design of industry' signed 'Don Adriano de Armado' (4.1, 85-86). Notably, the dramatist's use of salutations and superscriptions, or as Janet Gurkin Altman terms them, 'formal properties' (1982, 4), is not an inculcated habit of mind on the dramatist's part. Rather, his use of them is deliberate; for listing formal properties (properties that were previously hidden within the letter's interior space) makes them accessible to the audience. In turn, they become another source of meaning on stage.

Granted, many scholars have questioned the importance of epistolary theory in drama by focusing on the letter's reader or messenger. As Julian Hilton points out, 'the letter scene in effect, is an elliptical version of the more classical messenger scene, the letter itself eliding messenger and message. But such scenes also teach us a great deal about the reader in that invariably the reading of the letter is accompanied by comments, the nature and tone of which give us clues to his character' (1991, 141). Polonius' response to Hamlet's love letter is a prime example: '-that's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, "beautified" is a vile phrase' (*Hamlet* 2.2, 12-13). These comments speak to his character, rather than offering an accurate account of the letter's content. In a similar vein, Alan Stewart states that letters 'contain texts, certainly, but the message they convey is not primarily about the text, but about from whom they come, to whom they go, and how they make the journey' (2008, 23). Stewart argues further, 'Shakespeare's plays are clearly permeated by the grammar of letters and letter-writing, it would be wrong to assume that Shakespeare relies on a misplaced superscription or inappropriate folding for dramatic effect' (66).

An understanding of the roles of messengers is crucial for a thorough appreciation of letter scenes. However, shifting attention away from the text entirely has undermined Shakespeare's use of formal properties. I will argue that Shakespeare does rely on features like a superscription for dramatic effect. Indeed, formal properties may not be visible in the literal sense – initially, if ever. But, as Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa have argued, Elizabethan staging was symbolic rather than realistic: audiences had to work at visualizing the spectacles the words described (2000, 1). In this instance, the formal properties of a letter remained hidden until a character began to linger over them, listing them one by one to build an image of its interior space. The properties within this image were representatives of Elizabethan epistolary theory. Once they were presented, they communicated meaning specific to

precepts of letter writing. In fact, they function similarly to the red, black, or green wax of a letter: the latter two signified news of death and taxes.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, their meaning was impervious to the commentary that surrounded it. Formal properties, once they were articulated, also carried independent meaning. This signification has a particular purpose in Shakespeare's plays. A look at a few of his letter scenes reveals that, as the formal properties coalesce, so too does the identity of the letter's writer or addressee.

However, in order to fully appreciate the significance of Shakespeare's use of formal properties, it is necessary to discuss the traditional precepts of letter writing. First, I will briefly outline the historiography of early modern epistolary theory. This will underscore the methodologies underpinning formal properties, resulting in the epistolary construction of a writer and addressee's identity. Secondly, I will examine two non dramatic letters, emphasizing writers' everyday use of formal properties. These two sections will inform an examination of the letter scenes in *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *As You Like It*. Notably, these plays, as well as those quoted above, are comedies. The scope of this essay does not allow for a detailed discussion of genre. However, it should be pointed out that Shakespeare's treatment of letters in comedies differs from that of others genres. Indeed, tragedies, histories and comedies deal with different classes: characters in histories and tragedies (kings, queens, and noblemen and women) typically communicate horizontally. That is to say, they correspond with their equals. By contrast, the social aspirations of characters in comedies (stewards, merchants, shepherds) lead to correspondence with their superiors, leading to vertical communication. In turn, letters in comedies are employed to negotiate social terrain in fascinating ways.

## 2. Early Modern Epistolary Theory

Turning to traditional precepts of letter writing, the historiography of early modern epistolary theory begins in the late eleventh century and ends in the mid-fifteenth century. *Ars dictaminis*, the medieval art of letter writing, consisted of a highly formalized code of rules governing the composition of letters in Latin (Witt 2005, 68). Medieval epistolary manuals and everyday practitioners recognized three letter types: demonstrative, deliberative and judicial. These functioned as public instruments used to write contracts, requests, and legal agreements. Medieval practices remained fairly static until the emergence of humanism. Petrarch's discovery of Cicero's familiar letters caused classical authors to become a central focus of epistolary practices. Inspired by the elegance of familiar letters, prominent humanists began to use them as forms for imitation. By comparison, medieval letter forms seemed unnecessarily strict. As a result, humanists, Desiderius Erasmus in particular, launched an attack on medieval theory, writing treatises that Alois Gerlo has

called a manifesto against the outdated manuals and old-fashioned methods of the day (1971, 103). Indeed, Erasmus' early work reflects his distaste for the strictures of medieval letter writing. Later, however, he began reacting to what Judith Rice Henderson calls, 'extremes of classicism in sixteenth-century Italy' (1983, 331). His attempt to create theory based upon familiar letters was not unanimously accepted by humanists across the continent. For many were the professional benefactors of *ars dictaminis*, inheriting various offices of teachers or secretaries. The use of letters as public instruments was irreparably codified into letter writing culture. To reject *ars dictaminis* was to gut communication norms of education and business. Therefore, rather than discard the medieval letter types, Erasmus simply added the familiar letter to the list of demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial. In turn, epistolarity became a hybridization of medieval and humanist methodologies.

These epistolary precepts were adopted by the Tudor education system, making them a cornerstone of everyday life in early modern England. The authors of mid to late-sixteenth-century epistolary manuals, William Fulwood, Abraham Fleming and Angel Day, for instance, also amalgamated demonstrative, deliberative, judicial, and familiar letters, propagating this hybrid of epistolary theory. This transmission, however, necessitated heavy adaptation: those who penned vernacular manuals had different aims than humanist educators. As Lynn Magnusson has argued, Erasmus provided models for 'horizontal relations of reciprocal friendship' (1999, 61). That is to say, he composed letters in Latin, the language of scholars, in an attempt to refine the epistolary practices of the social and intellectual elite. However, this particular method did not address the needs of the growing middle class. Thus, a demand for vernacular handbooks materialized. Fulwood and Day in particular adapted aging methodology, offering vernacular instruction to the intellectual elite, as well as members of the middle class, such as merchants and secretaries. As a result, they scripted elaborate discursive models for enacting 'vertical' as well as 'horizontal' relations (Magnusson 1999, 61).

These manuals instructed the reader on the use of salutations, margins, signatures, and superscriptions, and their ability to communicate both verbal and visual meaning. A look at the theories of a letter's formal properties underscores their textual, as well as visual impact. As Day states in *The English Secretorie*, to write a 'sound and perfect' letter, a writer must first 'frame him selfe' on the page. To do so correctly, he must extend

consideration of the person to whome, and the cause whereof we meane at any time to write. In accompt of the person, is to be respected, first the estate and reputation of the partie, as whether hee be our better, our equal, or inferiour, next the lightnesse or grauity, as whether he be old, young, learned, vnskillfull, pleasaunt, sage, stately, gentle... or of what disposition, shewe, or profession soeuer he be, that according thereunto, the method of his Epistle may immediately be ordered. (1586, B3 r-v)

In other words, a writer must carefully consider the addressee's identity, including their status, before writing the letter. After this deliberation, the writer situated the salutation, subscription, signature, and superscription on the page according to the writer and recipient's relative superiority, equality, or inferiority.

Many manuals offered explications of each of these properties. Fulwood states: 'The first is the salutation... which is made in sundrie maners'. This element is the initial greeting at the top of the page. 'The second is the Subscription, which must be done according to the estate of the writer, and the quality of the person to whome we write'. The subscription is placed after the body of the message and serves as a farewell. Fulwood offers an example for a letter to a superior: 'By your most humble and obedient sonne, or seruant', and to an equal, 'By your faithfull frende for euer', and an inferior, which is simply, 'By yours'. He continues, 'The third is the Superscription, which must be upon the back of syde, the letter closed, sealed and packed up after the finest fashion'. Here, the recipient's address is placed, 'therewith the name of his dignitie, Lordship, Office, Nobilitie, Science, or Parentage' (1578, A8<sup>r</sup>). While Fulwood lists properties and examples for each, Day provides a lengthy chapter on 'Diuers orders of greetings, farewells, and subscriptions' (1586, B7<sup>v</sup>). Needless to say, a letter writer had a rather large bank of salutations and subscriptions from which to draw.

Indeed, each formal property was chosen to reflect the status of the writer and addressee respectively. Similarly, their respective status governs the location of the property on the page. Fulwood instructs: 'to our superiors we must write at the right side in the nether end of the paper... And to our equalles we may write towards the midst of the paper... To our inferiors we may write on high at the left hand' (1578, A8<sup>r</sup>). While these rules governed horizontal space, other manuals instructed on vertical space. John Massinger, in *The Secretary in Fashion*, maintained that within the lines of the superscription 'there must be as great a distance as may be between the first and second line, because the further they are distant, the greater respect they signifie' (1654, B5<sup>r</sup>). Next, the signature was positioned on the page. Penning one's name in the bottom right hand corner demonstrated respect for a superior. The negative space around each property carried as much meaning as the property itself. Jonathan Gibson has deemed this 'significant space' (1997, 1). Outlining these guidelines underscores the importance of visual organization in letter writing. Indeed, their organization would likely be noticed before the content of the letter was read. Appropriate spacing conveyed respect, but it also allowed a letter writer to perform social manoeuvres: manipulating visual conventions could alter perceptions of class.

Lastly, proper handwriting was the most effective way to enhance the formal properties of a letter: clear handwriting, paired with neatly written lines, was indeed a sign of respect. While epistolary manuals did not typically

teach these techniques, separate handbooks such as John Baildon and Jehan de Beau-Chesne's manual *A Booke containing divers sortes of hands* (1602) taught handwriting specifically. They lectured on a variety of skills, including body posture and proper ways to hold a pen. They went so far as to include a poem for their readers:

Your thome on your pen as highest bestow  
 The forefinger next, the middle below:  
 And holding it thus in most comely wise,  
 Your bodie vpriight, stoupe not with your head  
 Your breast from the boord, if that ye be wise,  
 Lest that ye take hurt, when ye have well fed. (A2')

Once these techniques were learned, there were still many nuances of handwriting to be taken into consideration. As James Daybell has recently argued, legibility often indicated a learned writer, and respect to the recipient. However, a letter with ink blots, smudges, and words crossed out may not necessarily suggest an uneducated hand, but familiarity between the correspondents (2012, 83). Thus, a close examination of handwriting enables a better conceptualization of the social hierarchies of those involved in the correspondence. Added to this complexity is the differentiation of script. A letter might contain a secretary hand, italic hand, or a mixture of both. The use of both may suggest a division of labour between a secretary and his master. This indicates that letter writing was a collaborative effort, rather than a closed, two-way mode of correspondence. As Daybell argues, significant meaning was attached to scribal and autograph letters (2012, 86-87). Letters with a mix of scripts may indicate a formal letter, one touching on matters of government, ambassadorial, legal and business matters. On the other hand, an autograph letter may suggest a familial or romantic tie, signifying a more intimate meaning.

While epistolary manuals did not instruct on handwriting, theorists did have well-developed opinions on the significance of handwriting and the use of an amanuensis, making it an important element of theory. Erasmus muses: 'How warmly we respond whenever we receive from friends or scholars letters written in their own hands! We feel as if we are listening to them and seeing them face to face'. He continues: 'A letter that is the product of someone else's fingers hardly deserves the name. For secretaries import a great deal of their own' (1980, 29). A wise letter writer would put considerable thought into the type of script used, and who wrote it. Indeed, neat and tidy script draped the letter's visual layout, bolstering its sentiment.

The formal properties outlined above constitute a complex system of signification. The wording of a salutation, for instance, is carefully considered in relation to the addressee's titles, while its location on the page represented their status. It is worth pointing out that the initial purpose of codifying the use of

formal properties was to ensure that meaning was not lost in instances where writing had to replace face to face communication. Formal and informal conversations involve more than just words: they include gestures and body language. Upon greeting a superior, for instance, one might bow, or curtsy, conveying deference nonverbally. Shifting a signature to the bottom right hand corner of the page communicated a similarly nonverbal sentiment. Gary Schneider discusses the attention writers and recipients paid to these details in his study *The Culture of Epistolarity*, stating that ‘such obligations were evident not only in letters sent “upward” but also in those epistles “downward” by royalty and the nobility – individuals were expected to acknowledge and obey the social contract of letter-writing’ (2005, 27). This appears to be relatively straightforward, but it would be more difficult in a society whose middle class was expanding and shifting. Indeed, formal properties were the tools used to manage the fluctuating nature of early modern society. Careful use of them demonstrated the writer’s consideration of the addressee’s identity and, by extension, respect. Interestingly however, this could also supplicate the addressee. Addressing an equal as a superior, for example, might render the addressee receptive to any requests the writer included in the letter. Importantly, underlying these negotiations is the notion that letter writing was a goal-oriented activity (Witt 1982, 34). They were written, not only to convey news or information, but to petition a patron, make a recommendation, foster a friendship, or court a lover. Given the opportunity letter writing involved, astute implementation of formal properties in relation to the identity of the addressee was crucial.

One of the most striking aspects of early modern letter writing is the relationship between epistolary theory and identity. To write what Day would call a ‘sound and perfect’ letter, a writer must first ‘frame him selfe’ on the page. In other words, he must fashion his identity onto the page. This is an intriguing concept, but one which has been given much critical attention.<sup>3</sup> However, little attention has been given to a letter writer’s use of formal properties to represent the identity of the addressee for purposes of supplication. The implication of a writer who ‘extendeth consideration of the person to whom and the cause whereof they meane at anytime to write’ (Day 1586, B3r) is that the use of formal properties and the recipient’s identity were inextricably linked. Furthermore, a look at early modern letters demonstrates that it was beneficial to underscore the addressee’s identity. A letter written by Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester, to Queen Elizabeth I is an excellent example of a writer who draws upon various aspects of the addressee’s identity during composition.

### 3. *Two Nonfictional Letters*

Leicester’s letter to the queen, written in 1588 (Dudley 2004), represents two aspects of his identity. First, it signifies his role as soldier, and secondly

as Elizabeth's favourite. His letter reports on the state of her army as they prepared for the Armada battle. At first, it appears to be merely business correspondence. The superscription reads: 'To the Queens most excellent Maiesty'. The letter's interior space is defined by a wide, clean margin to the left of the page while the body of the message is aligned with the right. The script is legible; the writing is in Leicester's own hand. The second clause of the first sentence assures the queen that 'at this tyme god be thanked there ys none touching your army'. Leicester's signature is in the lower right side of the paper. Particular meaning can be drawn from these features: the superscription accurately reflects her title: the queen, while the marginal space reiterates her superiority as the monarch. His decision to personally write the letter, rather than use a secretary, ensures privacy. The topic of the letter identifies Elizabeth as the authority on militaristic decisions, and the signature conveys further respect for her status. The letter is in good order; each formal property operates to convey respect and matters of business.

Upon closer examination, however, there are several features of the letter that add further meaning. For instance, the first clause of the first sentence reads: 'I am loth my most dear Lady to trwble you with some Juste cause'. Interestingly, Leicester has omitted the salutation. The lack of a salutation is not a lack of theory, but an indication of familiarity. Purposefully adding or omitting formal properties was a way to use epistolary theory to one's advantage. It added visual meaning to the letter's text. The subscription is further evidence that Leicester's correspondence is more familiar than meets the eye. It states: 'by your most fathfull [sic] & most obedient oō'. It appears traditional, until the reader comes across 'oō'. A seemingly nonsensical symbol, it is a clever attempt to assure the queen that he had only her in mind whilst composing the letter: one of Leicester's pet names for Elizabeth was 'Eyes' (Stewart and Wolfe 2004, 80). In addition to the pair of eyes in the subscription, Leicester sketches eyebrows over words with double o's in the body of the message, 'my mōost swete maiesty,' and 'my mōost' dere Lady'. This feature enables Leicester to convey intimacy despite the letter's official purpose. He employed formal properties to acknowledge her status and role as a sovereign poised for war. In a twist, however, he also draws upon her physical features to remind her he is familiar with her personal identity, an attempt of a man hoping to remain the queen's favourite from afar.

Leicester drew upon various characteristics of the queen to compose his message demonstrates the advantages of adhering to epistolary theory: clever use of formal properties supplicates the addressee by appealing to his/her identity. Taking the time to represent one's identity on to the page conveys respect, fosters trust, and appeals to vanity. Similar to an artist painting the likeness of his patron, the letter writer should draft an accurate, at times complimentary, representation of the addressee. While this method does not necessarily guarantee success, formal properties are at the writer's disposal

when attempting to secure the good will of the addressee. A glance at a reaction to a poorly written letter provides a nice contrast to a well written and high functioning letter. A fictional letter, extracted from a manual by James Howell reads:

Dear Cousin,

A Letter of yours was lately deliverd me, I made a shift to read the superscription, but within, I wonderd what language it might be... at first I thought twas Hebrew, or some of her Dialects, and so went from the liver to the heart, from the right hand to the left to read it, but could make nothing of it... then I thought it might be the Chinese language, and went to read the words perpendicular, and the lines were so crooked and distorted, that no coherence could be made; Greek I perceived it was not, nor Latin or English; so I gave it for mere gibberish, and your characters to be rather Hieroglyphicks then Letters. The best is, you keep your lines at a good distance, like those in Chancery-bills, who as a Clerk said, were made so wide of purpose, because the Clients should have room enough to walk between them without justling one another; yet this widnes had bin excusable if your lines had been straight, but they were full of odd kind of Undulations and windings; If you can no write otherwise, one may read your thoughts as soon as your characters. It is some excuse for you, that you are but a young beginner, I pray let it appear in your next what a proficient you are, otherwise some blame may light on me that placed you there; Let me receive no more Gibbrish or Hieroglyphicks from you, but legible letters, that I may acquaint your friends accordingly of your good preceedings, So I rest

Your very loving Cosen, J.H. (1650, L1<sup>v</sup>)

In this letter, Howell describes a message he received from a loved one. His cursory glance revealed that his cousin misused the formal properties of the letter. The illegible writing of the superscript marred the title, and the status it was supposed to acknowledge. The most fundamental precept of epistolary theory, consideration for the addressee, was flawed from the start. Reading further revealed that the handwriting, framed by uneven lines and margins, mangled the letter's aesthetic. This distracted from the intended meaning and, worse, immediately communicated disrespect. The letter writer's poor implementation of formal properties acted to discourage rather than persuade the addressee. Interestingly, in lieu of successfully acknowledging the addressee, the formal properties expose the writer's identity as a 'young beginner'; Howell warns his cousin that an inability to compose a letter will negatively reflect the writer's reputation.

It should be reiterated that this is a fictitious letter; that is to say, it is not authentic correspondence. It does, however, mimic everyday letters. In turn, it lends itself to similar situations found in extant letters. For example, it informs Lord Burghley's letter to Robert Sidney. Burghley wrote to complain of the 'paines' caused when he had to read the 'ciphers' encoded in Sidney's letter. The handwriting was so offensive that Lord Burghley demanded Sidney 'write

in a better hand'. If this were impossible, he begged that Sidney 'let some other wryte' them instead (Beal 2008, 255). While Howell's and Burghley's complaints represent disgruntled reactions to bad writing, Jonathan Swift's self-mocking postscript emphasizes the anxieties of a letter writer. At the thought of his own writing turning against him he states: 'Burn this before you read; I am in such a hast I have not time to correct the Style, or adjust the Periods; And I blush to expose my self before so great a Critick. You know I write without the assistance of Books' (Fitzmaurice 2002, 40).

Beneath the surface of this witty post script is the concern that the mistakes Swift made will reflect upon him negatively and incite criticism. In other words, a poorly written letter reflected the writer's identity, rather than the addressee's.

The comparison between a well written letter and a poorly written letter underscores the factor which determined a letter's success: the use of formal properties to represent the addressee's identity. Astute negotiation of the page conveyed consideration, but it also supplicated the addressee. Indeed, formal properties persuaded the addressee in the writer's absence. Careless construction of a letter on the other hand, obscured meaning and conveyed disrespect. Furthermore, when a letter was poorly written, the properties of the page work against, rather than for a letter writer. In fact, the formal properties dissuaded the addressee. The formal properties of such letters did not only affect the aesthetic and textual meaning of the letter, but reflected the writer's identity negatively.

#### 4. *Letters and Letter Writing in Shakespeare*

Needless to say, this argument is predicated upon the pervasive role of epistolary theory in everyday practices. As I mentioned previously, the significance of formal properties has gone unnoticed in previous studies of letters in Shakespeare's plays. However, more recently, studies have also argued against the impact of epistolary theory in manuscript letters. Stewart, for instance, questions its influence in early modern culture, stating that, 'extant early modern letters are perversely ignorant of anything approaching the epistolary theory that was supposed to dictate them' (2008, 14). In this study, Stewart directs attention away from theory and toward materiality. That is to say, he locates significance in the writing process by concentrating on the material items of letter writing: the pen, ink, paper, and wax. This approach has gained critical momentum. James Daybell's study for example is devoted to the examination of letters as material, rather than textual forms (2012, 10). He draws upon extant early modern manuscript letters, calling attention to their physical features. These studies are crucial, and have changed our understanding of early modern epistolarity. However, they do draw attention away from formal properties, undermining their significance.

There have been studies discussing the relationship between practice and theory, stating it is far more convoluted than the studies of materiality would suggest. Indeed, Daybell offers a balance in his chapter on manuals, finding that early modern adherence to epistolary formulae is 'a complex issue, one nuanced by considerations of social status, purpose, and genre' (2012, 69). He claims further that there is a 'division between formal epistolary modes and what might be termed "everyday" correspondence' (70). Peter Mack's studies similarly complicate the rejection of epistolary theory. He states that 'practical letters devoted to the conduct of business tend to convey expected content in standard form' while 'letters of friendship are characterized by considerable freedom in structure and content' (2003, 114). Thus, a modern reader would find letters of recommendation, condolence, and legality conforming to the protocol found in pedagogical texts and vernacular manuals. In addition, Leicester manipulated epistolary theory to convey affection in his correspondence. Thus, an examination of manuscript culture suggests that epistolary theory influenced writers who were composing their letters with a particular goal in mind. Furthermore, print culture suggests that epistolary manuals (dispensers of theory) were exceedingly popular. Fulwood's and Day's manuals, for example, were reprinted nine times over a period of almost fifty years, respectively. Erasmus' *De conscribendis epistolis* was adapted into a study guide and became a compulsory textbook in grammar schools both in England and throughout Europe (Stewart and Wolfe 1999, 22).

In turn, epistolary theory trickled into many facets of life. Importantly, this influence did not bypass drama. Magnusson has argued that, more than constituting mere practical guidance, manuals scripted roles to be played out in social situations. Handbooks like *The English Secretorie* would have been an 'invaluable resource for dramatists, like Shakespeare, who sought to simulate the situated discourse of people of all ranks' (1999, 76). The impact of the permeation of the epistolary theory was twofold. First, it established a widely available set of rules which Shakespeare could draw upon and manipulate for dramatic effect. Secondly, his audience would have been familiar with the standards from which he was operating. This dynamic, paired with their own everyday experiences with letter writing, created a sophisticated relationship between dramatist and audience. As a result, Shakespeare could use the rules encoded by manuals to inscribe a 'kind of coiled power' into his letters (Barish 1991, 37). On stage, the formal properties of these compact little forces uncoiled to become representatives of epistolary theory. Examining *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *As You Like It* reveals that the dramatist used elements like superscriptions and salutations, and the precepts which guided their use, to build the identity of his characters.

In *Twelfth Night*, during Malvolio's perusal of the forged letter, Sir Andrew asks, 'c's, u's, and t's? Why that?' (2.5, 88). The tag, 'Why that?' is the epistemological question at the root of Shakespeare's letter scenes. Why does Malvolio dwell on Olivia's scripted letters? I argue that a focus on the textual tropes has

caused this scene to be misread. Malvolio's musings, seemingly full of desire for Olivia, are studded with epistolary precepts that construct an image of its interior space. As the picture builds, the formal properties uncoil. However, rather than representing him as a man who desires Olivia, they represent him as a man who longs for social mobility.

Initially, Malvolio's interest in the letter is a kind of measured curiosity when he states, 'What employment have we here?' (2.5, 79-80). This is followed by a perusal of the letter's superscript, 'By my life, this is my lady's hand' (2.5, 84-85). Later deemed her 'sweet Roman hand' (3.4, 25), the writing he recognized was italic. Next, he notes, 'These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's' (2.5, 85-86). As a comic ploy to intensify interest in the message, the scripted letters have baited not only his attention, but the audience's. As his desire grows, so too does the letter. Next, he reads, "'To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes.'" Her very phrases!' (2.5, 89-90). While he dwells on each part, the formal properties synthesize. The handwriting conflates with the superscription and they settle in their prescribed places. 'Her very phrases', or the superscription, plays to his desire and encourages him to open the letter saying, 'By your leave, wax – soft, and the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal – 'tis my lady' (2.5, 90-93). The identification of the 'impressure' as Lucrece suggests his trespass is far greater than breaking the letter's wax. Such a violation indicates that Malvolio has lost himself in the trap the letter created.

The purpose of each formal property is to attract his attention, inciting his desire to keep reading. All the while, a detailed image is building on the stage. Fabian's side comment, 'This wins him, liver and all' (2.5, 94) is, seemingly, an apt account of the action. The next property is designed to win him, lust and all. What follows is an achievement orchestrated by Shakespeare's epistolary creativity. Malvolio reads

'Jove knows I love  
 But who?  
 Lips do not move,  
 No man must know  
 ...  
 I may command where I adore,  
 But silence like a Lucrece knife  
 With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore.  
 M.O.A.I. doth sway my life' (95-106)

The message, written to maintain his curiosity, is ambiguous. It is a riddle designed to foster his interest and persuade him to continue reading. After lingering over the acronym he exclaims 'Soft, here follows prose' (137-138). As prose follows verse, the margins of the virtual letter are contoured; their clean space widening and narrowing as he recites the text. The body of the

message fills the page and subsides with the farewell: 'She that would alter services with thee' and signature, 'The Fortunate-Unhappy' (154). The image is complete with the added postscript at the bottom.

This is the image of a letter known to many, yet never truly seen by audiences. The effort Shakespeare took to create it makes the letter recognizable. However, I would argue that the sexual overtones of this scene have caused it to be misread. Indeed, depictions of reading and writing in early modern drama frequently carried sexual connotations. Epistolary tools were often phallic representations, and reading reciprocated the desire that writing conveyed. This is apparent in Leonato's description of Beatrice's desire for Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*: 'O, when she had writ it and was reading it over, she found Benedick and Beatrice between the sheet' (2.3, 134-135). Comic and vulgar lines like Malvolio's seem to define the letter's purpose. In turn, the letter becomes a manifestation of his lust, rather than an accurate depiction of the letter's content. Approaching the scene in this way suggests that his desire is 'ripe for correction, [and] leads to his misreading of the letter' (Robertson 1996, 125).

The crux of this argument is: Malvolio did not misread the letter. He interpreted it precisely as Maria intended. A re-examination of the scene reveals that Maria's use of formal properties appealed to his desire for social mobility, rather than Olivia. In other words, the superscription (for instance) attracted Malvolio because it promised, not love, but advancement. It is only once he realizes that the letter represents a chance for social mobility that he becomes lustful for Olivia. This suggests that the image of the letter is not a product of his desire – his desire is a product of the letter. This sequence has gone unnoticed due to the scene's sexual overtones. However, this progression is detectable from the beginning of the scene. He enters the stage, overdressed and daydreaming of being married to Olivia. This is not because he is attracted to her, but because marrying her would allow him to 'be Count Malvolio!' He reassures himself that these aspirations are not unthinkable, for, 'There is example for't: the lady of Starchy married the yeoman of the wardrobe' (2.5, 37-38). In turn, his thoughts lead him to have wistful thoughts of Olivia: of 'having come from her daybed, where I have left Olivia sleeping -' (46-47). Indeed, this is another chance to read the scene in relation to sexual desire. However, this lustful thought only manifests after he muses over the yeoman's good fortune. In addition, he imagines that, 'Toby approaches; curtsies', and, 'I extend my hand to him, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control' (64-65), continuing, 'Cousin Toby, my fortunes having cast me on your niece give me this prerogative of speech' (68-69). The same sequence is repeated throughout this scene. He begins with a desire for social mobility, and naturally his thoughts turn to Olivia: she is his chance for advancement.

This sequence is repeated as he reacts to the letter. For instance, he first mentions the handwriting: 'By my life, this is my lady's hand' (84-85). His notation of the italic hand serves an important function. Personal handwriting

carried various meanings. In a business letter like that of Leicester's, it might be an attempt to keep matters private. Once his business letter took on an air of familiarity, however, it could represent the intimacy of equals. Regardless, it suggests the absence of a secretary or third party. In the case of Maria's letter, the audience knows better; nevertheless, Malvolio believes it is a letter to him from Olivia. For him, it represents a personally penned message that signifies the addressee is worthy of its writer's hand. Furthermore, italic was an upper class hand. Gentlemen were expected to mix scripts while upper class women were typically taught italic. It was the style thought to be easiest to learn and less strenuous in practice (Daybell 2006, 135). Writers of the lower, and sometimes middling, classes often used secretary. If Maria had constructed the letter with mixed script it would have indicated formal correspondence, or a middle class writer. A formal letter or a message from a middle class writer would not have interested Malvolio, given his desire for social mobility.

By the time Malvolio focuses on the text of the superscription, the handwriting had already baited him. The purpose of a superscription is to identify the addressee, listing the title that matches their social status. The outward direction of Maria's letter, however, reads 'To the unknown beloved'. It does not identify him, but his desire to be the person worthy of the superscription overwhelmed him. Compromised by his longing for social mobility, it does not occur to Malvolio that he is not worthy of his lady's hand, in writing or in marriage. Indeed, a proper superscription listing his name and title would have jolted him out of his reverie. The 'unknown' title, by contrast, invited him to replace it with 'To the Count Malvolio beloved, this and my good wishes'. The letter offers love, but importantly is also offers advancement.

As he reads its content, the letter transitions from verse to prose, contouring the margins, the space narrowing and widening as he recited the text. It would be difficult for a writer using both verse and prose to observe the marginal rules; that is to say, to align the body of the text with a margin. Rather, its undulating lines draw attention to the clean space around the body of the text, creating the illusion that it is in the middle of the page, the space reserved for the communication of equals. In reading the letter aloud, Malvolio offers this important information. Indeed, the theory underpinning it makes it a reliable account of its content. A look at *As You Like It* will demonstrate that a letter could be read subjectively if its contents are withheld or read silently. However, Malvolio's detailed account allows the formal properties to coalesce, signifying meaning despite surrounding commentary.

His social aspirations, in many ways, define his identity. Indeed, Maria knew of her unaddressed addressee's social aspirations, forging the letter accordingly. For at the beginning of the scene, she stated, 'Malvolio's coming down this walk. He has been yonder i' the sun practising behaviour to his own shadow this half-hour. Observe him, for the love of mockery, for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him. Close, in the name of jesting'

(2.5, 15-20). Here, Maria extends ‘consideration to the person to whom and the cause whereof’ she intended to write, organizing the formal properties accordingly. In other words, she tailors the letter according to Malvolio’s identity as a steward with lofty aspirations, and appeals to his desire for equality. The hand of an upper-class woman, and superscription offering a count’s title baited him. Once the letter was open, the margins contoured the verse and prose, framing the lines communicating Olivia’s mutual attraction with equality.

A comparison between a well-written and poorly written letter will emphasise formal properties’ agency on the stage. Falstaff’s letters in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are an excellent contrast in this respect. There are very few letters in early modern drama that are more offensive than those delivered to Mistresses Page and Ford. Falstaff writes identical letters to both of the married women in an attempt to woo them simultaneously. Predictably, his poor writing etiquette causes offense and leads to his misfortunes. The letters are the catalyst to his buck basket and cross-dressing adventures. While the letters’ role in driving the plot is conspicuous, Shakespeare’s manipulation of their ‘significant space’ to make them a memorable impetus is not. For, it is his use of each letters’ negative space that ushers in the women’s double revenge.

The letters make their first appearance in Act one, scene three. Falstaff, upon handing them over for delivery, discloses the subject and purpose of his letters. He states: ‘I have writ me here a letter to her – and here another to Pages’s wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious oellades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly’ (1.3, 51-55). His assessment of the situation indicates that he thought more about himself than the identity of his addressees. Interestingly, however, at this point, he does not disclose the fact that the letters are identical. The phrasing of his lines suggests they might vary in content. The use of ‘another’ in ‘I have writ me here a letter to her – and another to Page’s wife’ is reasonably ambiguous. That he modifies the context of Mistress Page’s letter suggests he may have tailored it to his individual experience with her. The full effect of their matching texts is not felt until Act two, scene one.

When Mistress Page enters with her letter, she is unaware of its content. She recites the message, reading, ‘Ask me no reason why I love you, for though Love use Reason for his precision, he admits him not for counsellor. You are not young, no more am I’ (2.1, 5-7). As she reads the letter’s content, the components of the letter are presented to the audience. The heavy prose of Falstaff’s introduction strains the margins, narrowing to relieve its edges with verse:

By me, thine own true knight,  
 By day or night  
 Or any kind of light,  
 With all his might  
 For thee I fight. (13-17)

Mistress Page swiftly rejects the letter on the basis of its purpose, 'O, wicked, wicked world... what an unweighed behavior hath this Flemish drunkard picked, i'th' devil's name, out of my conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me?' (19-24). The expression 'unweighed behaviour' emphasizes Falstaff's reckless consideration of the circumstances. Her ranting turns to revenge just as Mistress Ford enters with her own letter.

As they examine one another's letters, Mistress Page observes, 'Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs' (2.1, 67-68). They contain the same undulating margins that line the same block of prose and narrow verse. Interestingly, the only difference between the two letters is the words 'Page' and 'Ford'. However, as the separate names on an otherwise identical message incite their anger, their commentary worked to etch away even this difference: 'I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names – sure more, and these are of the second edition. He will print them, out of doubt – for he cares not what he puts into the press when he would put us two' (2.1, 71-74). With this emendation, the letters became wholly identical. Furthermore, one letter with one image at the beginning of the scene proliferated into a thousand letters with one image. Their own messages were merely second editions. As the letters multiply, so too did Falstaff's offenses. Mistress Ford read the letter aloud in Act two, scene one, making the audience privy to its content and allowing the formal properties to speak for themselves. This letter, regardless of its later multiplication, was offensive. The formal property that signifies Falstaff's lack of consideration is derived from the concept of significant space. The organization of formal properties on the page conveyed immediate meaning. In the case of Falstaff's letters, Shakespeare inverted the concept of significant space for dramatic effect. The blank space in the middle of the text became the conspicuous space that communicates disrespect. These gap-ridden letters are the last images Mistresses Page and Ford dwell upon. Mistress Page's initial vow 'revenged I will be' (2.1, 29) becomes 'Let's be revenged on him' (2.1, 89). The significant space, inverted to work against Falstaff, is the formal property that ushers in their double revenge.

Falstaff's lack of forethought and consideration of the individual identities of Mistresses Page and Ford is at the root of these letter scenes. He attempts to woo women who were already married, indicating poor consideration of the circumstances. It was not, however, his most offensive oversight. An important part of one's identity is marital status, but Mistresses Page and Ford appear to be more offended by the audacity of writing identical letters, rather than being written in the first place. For, identical letters are the antithesis of personal identity. Their focus on the blank space suggests that, had the letters been tailored to their individual identities, Falstaff's letters may have been successful. It may seem impossible that he could woo either Mistress Page or Ford, but the letter in *Twelfth Night* demonstrates the ability of formal properties to be rather persuasive.

The letter scene in *As You Like It* is a fascinating contrast to *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Phoebe writes a 'taunting letter' (3.5, 135) to the cross-dressed Rosalind, believing she is a man named 'Ganymede'. Importantly, Phoebe carefully considered the identity of the addressee. Unfortunately, Rosalind's disguise caused her to consider the wrong one: she wrote a letter to Rosalind while she was dressed as a man, but Rosalind read it as a woman. In other words, Phoebe attempted to accurately construct the letter but, due to Rosalind's disguise, incorrectly addressed the addressee. This has implications which are twofold: Phoebe's letter never accurately represented the addressee, thus it could never be successful. In turn, the letter represented Phoebe's identity, rather than that of her addressee.

Act four, scene three begins with the delivery of Phoebe's letter. Silvius passes the message to Rosalind who quickly peruses it. Amidst the transaction he states, 'I know not the contents' (4.3, 9). Rosalind glances at the letter, reading it silently. Here, Shakespeare draws attention to the letter by concealing it. Her unwillingness to read it aloud has an interesting effect: the letter's inaccessibility stimulates interest in its content, making it the focal point of the stage. This message, as part of the play's subplot, establishes a juxtaposition to the main plot. In earlier scenes, Orlando posts his verses for Rosalind, terribly written, for all the forest to see. They are widely received, and widely criticized. Rosalind observes Orlando's verses to have, 'more feet than the verses could bear' (3.2, 161-162) and Touchstone deems them to bear 'bad fruit' (3.2, 114). There are many opinions about the verses, but publishing them on the trees allows the audience to interpret Orlando's writing despite the surrounding commentary. Phoebe's letter on the other hand stays hidden and becomes subject to Rosalind's personal reading. That is to say, the audience is given license to criticize Orlando's verses, but this freedom is revoked when Rosalind conceals Phoebe's letter.

After reading the message, Rosalind merely states, 'She says I am not fair, that I lack manners' (4.3, 16). Indeed, these are vague details. She states further, 'Well, Shepherd, well, / This is a letter of your own device' (4.3, 20-21). Once more, Silvius states, 'No, I protest; I know not the contents. / Phoebe did write it' (4.3, 22-23). By concealing the text, Shakespeare draws attention to the letter, but also threatens the agency of the letter's formal properties. If the letter stays hidden, it risks becoming a projection of Rosalind's fears. Her fears in this scene stem from the sexual metaphors associated with reading and writing. By reading Phoebe's message, Rosalind has reciprocated the lust that the shepherdess's writing conveys. She conceals the letter and questions its authorship in an attempt to deflect the unintentional interest she displayed by reading it (Wall 1996, 142).

Rosalind ridicules the message further, mitigating the mismatched circumstances. Silvius' protests encourage Rosalind to describe the letter's poor quality. She launches into a disparaging rant:

I saw her hand. She has a leathern hand,  
 A free-stone coloured hand. I verily did think  
 That her old gloves were on; but 'twas her hands.  
 She has a housewife's hand - but that's no matter.  
 I say she never did invent this letter.  
 This is a man's invention, and his hand (4.3, 25-30)

Rosalind's pun on the meaning of 'hand' is vital to this scene. The word's double meaning begins to construct Phoebe's identity. Indeed, the primary use of 'hand' denotes the letter's handwriting. The expressions 'a leathern hand' and 'house-wife's hand' refer to her physical hand, worn with the work of a shepherdess. In Rosalind's attempts to disparage the letter, she has given a clue to the letter's interior space. However, in the line 'This is a man's invention, and his hand', she releases the image of the secretary script, which glosses Phoebe's letter. Men often used a mix of secretary and italic script; and, secretaries often used it in the body of their master's message. However, as Maria's use of italic demonstrated, women were taught to use an italic hand. This is not only representative of gender, but class. Though it is brief, Rosalind's description reveals that the letter is representative of Phoebe's uneducated hand. Her script is associated with her leathern hand; her worn skin is that of a shepherdess making the letter synonymous with Phoebe's identity.

It is only after Rosalind has satisfactorily criticized the letter that she feels reading it aloud is safe. She states, 'mark how the tyrant writes' (4.3, 40) and begins to recite

Art thou god to shepherd turned,  
 That a maiden's heart hath burned? (4.3, 41-42)

only to interrupt herself, 'Can a woman rail thus?' (4.3, 43). Silvius responds, 'Call you this railing?' (4.3, 44). Rosalind continues to read the heartfelt message, but the damage has been done. The conflicting commentary undermines the messenger and recipient as trustworthy. That is to say, Rosalind offers a reading of the letter that derives from her anxieties, while Silvius' interjection is informed by his love for Phoebe. All that is left is Phoebe's hopeful verse, glossed in a secretary script. The complete image of the letter is devastating. Like a pinched spring, the compressed content of the hidden letter made the formal properties uncoil all the more powerfully when released.

This scene juxtaposes those with Orlando's lines, but it is also a contrast to *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. For instance, Malvolio reads the letter immediately, lingering over each detail. The scene in *As You Like It* contains a letter that is read silently and subjected to the reader's response. The audience can only access the letter through Rosalind in these moments. In turn, it becomes a representative of Rosalind's fears. However, once she

comments on its appearance, and reads its contents, the audience is given unmediated access to the letter's interior space.

In the explications of each letter, whether they are authentic or fictional, I have underscored the various ways writers consider (or disregard) the person they intend to write to. The factor that determines their success is the use of formal properties to represent the addressee's identity. Astute negotiation of the page conveys respect. Furthermore, it appeals to the addressee's good will. Again, this is true of authentic, fictional, and stage letters. However, this notion is more complex when it comes to the stage. In order to capitalize on the signification of formal properties, Shakespeare had to make them accessible first. As a result, he created an image of the letter using the commentary of the addressee. The elements of the page, newly available, offer a new source of meaning on stage. In the case of Malvolio, attention to the presence of formal properties redefined the purpose behind his actions, and by extension, his identity. The letters to Mistresses Page and Ford, by contrast, represented letters that reflected Falstaff's identity. In turn, his inconsiderate use of letter writing caused the women to take revenge upon him. Phoebe's letter is an interesting comparison to the first two plays; for, despite her attempt to consider the circumstances, and the addressee's identity, her letter ultimately failed. In addition, Phoebe's letter is read silently by Rosalind, unlike those of Maria and Falstaff. At once, it incites tension over, and fascination with, the unattainable object. Indeed, this scene is a reminder of what formal properties add to the stage, and what is lost when they are absent.

<sup>1</sup>Quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from: William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. by S. Wells, G. Taylor, J. Jowett and W. Montgomery, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>For a study of wax and sealing in early modern England, see Newman 2012.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen Greenblatt (1980) discusses this notion at length, while Lisa Jardine (1993) discusses Erasmus' use of letters to fashion his professional identity. In addition, Jennifer Richards (2003, chapter 5) analyses Gabriel Harvey's and Edmund Spenser's attempts to construct their respective scholarly identities in their printed letters.

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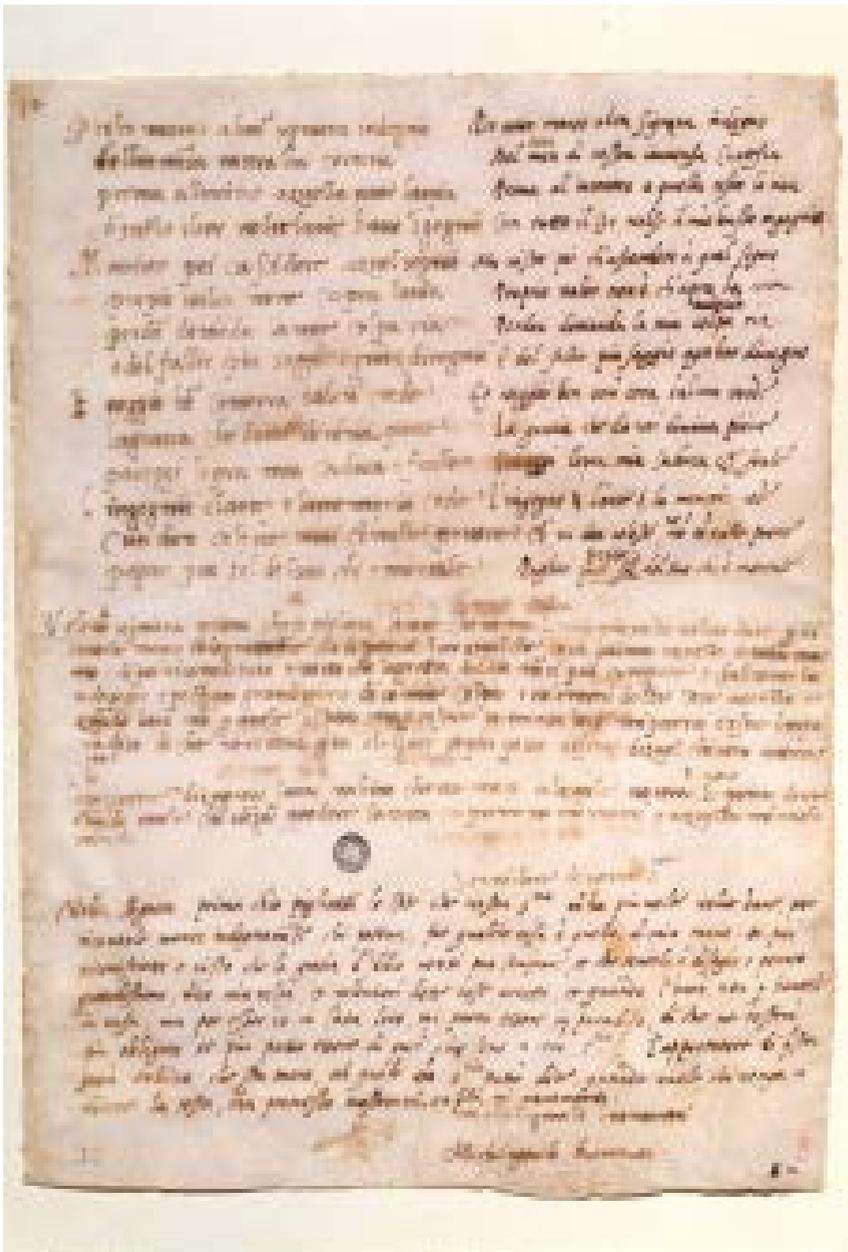
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# APPENDIX





Michelangelo Buonarroti, Letter to Vittoria Colonna with a poem. Florence, Archivio Buonarroti, XIII, 114. Courtesy of Archivio Buonarroti



## By Diverse Hands

Sir, more then kisses, letters mingle Soules;  
For, thus friends absent speake...  
John Donne, 'To Sir Henry Wotton', 1587-1588

*The texts included in this Appendix have been selected following the categories discussed in the essays which appear in this volume. For the most part, these categories refer to the art or craft of the various letter writers (e.g. Artists, Writers, Players, Scientists, Craftsmen); one category refers to a particular genre or type of letters (that of Dedicatory Letters). Less clear-cut, because it obviously overlaps almost all the other categories, is that of Women. In it, however, I have endeavoured to include missives written by women in their position as private persons, rather than as artists, writers, or public figures, roles in which they appear within the other categories. Needless to say, to anthologize letters written in a lapse of time of almost three centuries is a hopeless task and can only aim at presenting as wide as possible a variety of specimens which may appear interesting precisely because of their quasi-randomness.*

### 1. Artists

*Rough draft of a letter from Leonardo da Vinci to Duke Ludovico Sforza, 'il Moro', in which the artist, seeking employment with the Duke, presents his own credentials and describes some of his mechanical inventions as tools most useful in war as well as his artistic merits as a sculptor and painter (1482?).*

Most illustrious Lord, Having now sufficiently considered the specimens of all those who proclaim themselves skilled contrivers of instruments of war, and that the invention and operation of the said instruments are nothing different to those in common use, I shall endeavour, without prejudice to any one else, to explain myself to your Excellency showing your Lordship my secrets, and then offering them to your best pleasure to work with effect at opportune moments, as well as all those things which, in part, shall be briefly noted below (and in many more, according to the diverse occasions).

1) I can build up a sort of extremely light and strong bridges, apt to be most easily carried, and with them you may pursue, and at any time flee from, the enemy; and others, secure and indestructible by fire and battle, easy and convenient to lift and place. Also methods of burning and destroying those of the enemy.  
2) I know how, in a siege, to take the water out of the trenches, and make endless variety of bridges, and covered ways and ladders, and other machines pertaining to such expeditions.

3) Item, if, by reason of the height of the banks, or the strength of the place and its position, it is impossible, when besieging a place, to avail oneself of the plan of bombardment, I have methods for destroying every rock or other fortress, even if it were founded on a rock.

4) Again I have kinds of mortars most convenient and easy to carry; and with these can fling small stones almost resembling a storm; and with the smoke of these causing great terror to the enemy, to his great detriment and confusion.

5) Item, I have means by secret and tortuous mines and ways, made without noise, to reach a designated place, even if it were needed to pass under a trench or a river.

6) Item, I will make covered chariots, safe and unattackable, which will penetrate the enemy and their artillery, and there is no body of armed men so great that they would not break through it. And behind these, a numerous infantry will be able to follow, quite unhurt and without any hindrance.

7) Item, in case of need I will make big guns, mortars and light ordnance of very beautiful and useful forms, out of the common type.

8) Where the operation of bombardment should fail, I would contrive catapults, mangonels, trebuchets and other machines of marvellous efficacy and not in common use; and in short, according to the variety of cases, I will contrive various and endless means of offence and defence.

9) And when the fight should be at sea I have kinds of many machines most efficient for offence and defence; and vessels which will resist the attack of the largest guns and powder and fumes.

10) In time of peace I believe I can give perfect satisfaction and to the equal of any other in architecture and the composition of buildings public and private; and in guiding water from one place to another.

Item, I can carry out sculpture in marble, bronze or clay, and also in painting whatever may be done and as well as any other, be he whom he may.

Item, the bronze horse may be taken in hand, which is to be to the immortal glory and eternal honour of the prince your father of happy memory, and of the illustrious house of Sforza.

And if any one of the above-named things seem to any one to be impossible or not feasible, I am most ready to make the experiment in your park, or in whatever place may please your Excellency—to whom I commend myself with the utmost humility &c.

*A letter from Giorgio Vasari in Florence to his friend the poet Pietro Aretino in Venice. The letter was written on March 1, 1536, when Vasari was employed by Alessandro I de' Medici. Two years before, Vasari had been commissioned by Alessandro to decorate the corner chamber on the ground floor of Palazzo Medici, where he painted four frescoes with episodes from the life of Julius Caesar. The letter accompanies one of the four cartoons which served as preparation for these paintings, which Vasari is sending as a gift to Aretino.*

Your just desire to protect me which makes you hold me as your son, as you wish to get and see some of my paintings, induces me to send you by my runner Lorenzo another parcel with one of the four cartoons which I painted in that room at the corner of the Medicis' palace where, not many years ago, stood the public loggia. And if it was not that the parcel would be too big I would have decided to send you not only this but all four in the same bundle. But I will tell you in detail what kind of invention is in the ones which remain with me and, from the one I am sending, you will know what the ways and qualities of the others are, as well as the postures of the figures, their robes and their motions and feelings. Our most illustrious Duke is so fond of Julius Caesar's deeds that, if he lives and I continue to serve him during my life, in a few years the palace will be full of the stories of all his feats.

And therefore he required these stories, which are large and full of figures, to be life size, and in the first – which is the one you will receive – he wanted me to paint the scene when Caesar, fighting by sea in Egypt against Ptolemy, seeing the danger of being discomfited, threw himself into the sea; and, vigorously swimming, bore in his mouth the attire of the imperial army, in one hand the booklet of his commentaries and, swimming with the other, arrived safely ashore where there were boats with archers who, following him, aimed at him but never hit him. As you will see, I painted a brawl of naked men in order to show in the first place the art of fighting and in the second to tell the story: that, armed with a crew, the galleys fight sturdily to win the battle against the enemy. If you like it, I will be happy, since this is your wish, that, in your time, a painter from your own city be of those who, with their hands, can paint speaking figures; and, if you think that God has satisfied your will, ask me to forsake my covetous youth, for pleasures cause the intellect to go astray and become barren, and cannot bear those fruits which nourish men's names after their death.

...

And, coming back to the second cartoon in which I figured a night which, in the light of the moon, shows a dazzled light in the figures. There is Caesar who, having left the crew on the ships and, on the shore, a large army lighting fires and building fortifications, alone in a boat, escapes the tempest; and to the mariner who complained about ill venture: 'Do not be afraid! You are bearing Caesar'. There are also mariners tossed by the sea and the boat tossed by the waves, and there is a great deal of technical mastery.

In the third is the circumstance when he was given the letters which his friends had written to Pompey against him, which he burned in a great fire among the citizens. I know that you will much like this one owing to the admiration you have for that people, and the many servants who, bending, fan the flames and others, bearing wood, letters and pamphlets, execute Caesar's order, in the presence of all the armies' heads.

The fourth and last one is his honoured triumph where, all around his chariot, are the many things made prisoners and the jesters who jeer at them,

the cart bearing the statues, the cities taken by force, the enormous amount of spoils, the prize and honour of soldiers. This one, since I had to discontinue work to make other things for His Excellency, is not yet being painted, although I already finished colouring the first three.

Now be healthy and remember me, that I wish to see you one day; and give my best greetings to Sansovino and Titian. And when you get the cartoon which I am going to send you, deign to send me word about their opinion as well as your judgment. And with this I leave you.

*A Supplication by Orazio Gentileschi to Pope Paul V. The letter was written by the end of February, 1612, following the rape perpetrated by the painter Agostino Tassi of Orazio's daughter Artemisia, for which Orazio begs for justice from the Pope.*

Most Holy Father, Orazio Gentileschi, painter, most humble servant of Your Holiness, respectfully reports to You how, through Madame Tuzia his tenant, and as a result of her complicity, a daughter of the plaintiff has been deflowered by force and carnally known many, many times by Agostino Tassi, painter and close friend and associate of the plaintiff; also taking part in this obscene business was Cosimo Quorli, your orderly. By this I mean that besides the rape, the same orderly Cosimo, through his intrigues, took from the hands of the same young woman some paintings of her father's, and in particular a Judith large in size. And because, Holy Father, this is such a grievous deed, giving such serious and great injury and damage to the poor plaintiff, especially since it was done under the trust of friendship, it is like a murder, and committed by a person who is used to committing even worse crimes than this one, the perpetrator being the said Cosimo Quorli. Thus, kneeling at your Holy feet, I implore you in the name of Christ to take action against this ugly intemperance by bringing to justice him who deserves it, because, besides granting a very great favour, your action will keep the poor plaintiff from disgracing his other children. And he will always pray to God for your most just reward.

By Orazio Gentileschi, painter

*In the letter which follows, written from Naples on January 30, 1649, Artemisia Gentileschi writes to her patron Don Antonio Ruffo about some paintings of hers she has sent him. In it, Artemisia shows consciousness of the difficulties a woman painter seeking recognition inevitably meets.*

Most Illustrious Sir and My Master,  
By God's will, Your Most Illustrious Lordship has received the painting and I think that by now you must have seen it. I fear that before you saw the painting you must have thought that I was arrogant and presumptuous. But

I hope to God that after seeing it you will agree that I was not totally wrong. In fact, were it not for Your Most Illustrious Lordship, of whom I am so affectionate a servant, I would not have given it for one hundred and sixty, because in every other place where I have been, I was paid one hundred *scudi* per figure. And this was in Florence as well as in Venice, and in Rome and even in Naples when there was more money. Whether this is due to merit or luck, Your Most Illustrious Lordship, a discriminating nobleman with all of the virtues of the world, will judge what I am.

I sympathize greatly with Your Lordship, because a woman's name causes doubt until her work is seen. Please forgive me, for God's sake, if I gave you reason to think me greedy. As for the rest I will not trouble you any longer. I will only say that on other occasions I will serve you with greater perfection, and if Your Lordship likes my work, I will send you also my portrait so that you can keep it in your gallery as all the other Princes do.

And thus I end this letter and I most humbly bow to Your Most Illustrious Lordship with the assurance that as long as I live I will be ready for any orders from you. To end, I kiss your hands.

Your Most Illustrious Lordship's most humble servant Artemisia Gentileschi

*The following seven short letters were written by Rembrandt to Sir Constantijn Huygens, Secretary to Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, about the so-called 'Passion Series' which Rembrandt had been commissioned to paint for the Prince. The series was commissioned in 1628 and composed between this date and 1639. All these letters were written at various moments in 1639.*

My lord,

My most gracious lord Huygens, I hope that your lordship will please tell his Excellency that I am hard at work on and expertly completing the three passion paintings which his Excellency himself has commissioned from me, an entombment and a resurrection and an Ascension of Christ. These are companion pieces to a raising and a descent of Christ on the Cross. Of the three earlier named pieces one is finished, the one with Christ's ascension to Heaven, and the other two are about half done. And so if his Excellency prefers to have this finished piece first or the three together, I beg my lord let me know that I may best serve the desires of his Prince Excellency. And I also can not resist, because of my readiness to serve, from honoring my lord with my latest work trusting that this will be taken in the best way Along with my greetings I commend all of yours to God in health.

My lord's ready and devoted servant

Rembrandt

I live beside the pensionary boereel nieuwe doelstraat

My lord,

After offering friendly greetings let me say I think it good that I follow directly to see how the piece fits in with the rest. As for the price of the piece, I have certainly earned 200 pounds with it but I will let myself be contented with whatever his excellence pays me. My lord, if my lordship will not take my cheek amiss, I will not neglect to repay the favour.

Your Lordship's ready and devoted servant  
Rembrandt

In the gallery of His exc. it will show best as there is a strong light there.

My lord,

Because of the great pleasure and devotion that I have put into the execution of the two pieces which his Highness has had me make, being the one where the dead body of Christ is laid in the grave and the other one where Christ rises up from the dead to the great shock of the guards. These same two pieces are now complete as well due to studious diligence so that I am now also inclined to deliver these in order to please his Highness since in these two the greatest and the most natural movement is observed which is also the reason that I have had them so long in my hands.

I therefore would request if my lord could please tell his Highness of this and if my lord could please have the two pieces first delivered to your house as happened before. I will wait first for a short note to this effect. And, since my lord will be bothered with this business for the second time, in recognition a piece 10 feet long and 8 feet high will be included as well which will do honour to my lord in his house. I wish you all happiness and the blessing of salvation, Amen.

Your Lordship, my lord's r. and devoted servant  
Rembrandt

the 12 January 1639

My lord I live on the inner Amstel  
the house is called the 'sugar bakery'

My lord

It is then with the permission of your lordship that I send these two pieces which I believe will be found sufficient that his Highness will now pay me no less than a thousand guilders for each. Yet if his Highness thinks them not worth that and will pay me less according to his own pleasure I rely on his Highness' knowledge and discretion. I will thankfully let myself be contented with that and remain along with my greetings his ready and devoted servant

Rembrandt

What I have advanced for the frames  
and the crate is 44 guilders

My Lord

I have read your lordship's agreeable missive of the 14th with particular pleasure. I find there your lordship's good favour and disposition so that I remain with heartfelt devotion obliged to repay your lordship with service and friendship. Because of my inclination to do so I am sending the accompanying canvas against my lord's wishes hoping that this will not be taken amiss by you as it is the first token that I have presented my lord. The tax collector mr. Wttenboogaert paid me a visit as I was busy packing these two pieces. He wanted to see one first. He said he could advance me the payments here from his office if it pleased his Highness. Thus I would request of you my lord that whatever his Highness grants me for the 2 pieces that I may receive this money here soon as it would be particularly useful to me now. Awaiting your lordship's answer I wish your lordship and your family all happiness and salvation along with my greetings.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

In haste this 27 January 1639

My lord hang this piece in a strong light and such that one can stand far away so that it will sparkle at its best.

Honoured Lord

I have complete trust that everything will go well and in particular regarding my compensation for these last 2 pieces trusting your lordship that if it had gone according to your lordship's favor and what is right there would have been no objection to the agreed price. And as far as the pieces delivered earlier no more than 600 carolus guilders were paid for each. And if his Highness can not be moved to a higher price with good will although they are admittedly worth it, I can be satisfied with 600 c. guilders each, as long as my outlay for the 2 ebony frames and the crate, which is 44 guilders, can be included in the account. So I would kindly request of my lord that I may now soon receive my payment here in Amsterdam, trusting that due to the good favour shown me I will soon enjoy my monies, while I remain grateful for all such friendship. And with my heartfelt greetings to my lord and to all your lordship's nearest friends, all are commended to God in long-lasting health.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

My Lord,

My noble Lord it is with scruples that I inflict my letter upon your lordship in order to say that I complained to the collector Wttenbogaert concerning the delay of my payment, although the treasurer Volbergen denies this as the dues were claimed yearly. The collector Wttenbogaert responded to this last Wednesday that Volbergen has claimed the same dues every half year up till now, so that more than 4000 carolus guilders have once again appeared at the

same office. And as these are the true circumstances I beseech you my well-disposed Lord that my warrant might be taken care of at once so that I might now at last receive my well-earned 1244 guilders. And I will always seek to repay this to your lordship with reverence, service and evidence of friendship. With this goes my heart-felt greetings and wishes God keep your lordship in good health and bless you.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

I live on the inner Amstel in the sugar-bakery.

## 2. Writers

*In a letter to Giovanni Boccaccio, written in 1366, Francesco Petrarca discusses the merits of the Latin tongue and the potentialities of the vernacular, in which he has been trying his hand, also complaining about the ignorance and excessive pride of those who call themselves 'learned'.*

To be sure, the Latin, in both prose and poetry, is undoubtedly the nobler language, but for that very reason it has been so thoroughly developed by earlier writers that neither we nor anyone else may expect to add very much to it. The vernacular, on the other hand, has but recently been discovered, and, though it has been ravaged by many, it still remains uncultivated, in spite of a few earnest labourers, and still shows itself capable of much improvement and enrichment. Stimulated by this thought, and by the enterprise of youth, I began an extensive work in that language. I laid the foundations of the structure, and got together my lime and stones and wood. And then I began to consider a little more carefully the times in which we live, the fact that our age is the mother of pride and indolence, and that the ability of the vainglorious fellows who would be my judges, and their peculiar grace of delivery is such that they can hardly be said to recite the writings of others, but rather to mangle them. Hearing their performances again and again, and turning the matter over in my mind, I concluded at length that I was building upon unstable earth and shifting sand, and should simply waste my labours and see the work of my hands levelled by the common herd. Like one who finds a great serpent across his track, I stopped and changed my route for a higher and more direct one, I hope. Although the short things I once wrote in the vulgar tongue are, as I have said, so scattered that they now belong to the public rather than to me, I shall take precautions against having my more important works torn to pieces in the same way.

And yet why should I find fault with the unenlightenment of the common people, when those who call themselves learned afford so much more just and serious a ground for complaint? Besides many other ridiculous peculiarities, these people add to their gross ignorance an exaggerated and most disgusting

pride. It is this that leads them to carp at the reputation of those whose most trivial sayings they were once proud to comprehend, in even the most fragmentary fashion.

O inglorious age! that scorns antiquity, its mother, to whom it owes every noble art, that dares to declare itself not only equal but superior to the glorious past. I say nothing of the vulgar, the dregs of mankind, whose sayings and opinions may raise a laugh but hardly merit serious censure. I will say nothing of the military class and the leaders in war, who do not blush to assert that their time has beheld the culmination and perfection of military art, when there is no doubt that this art has degenerated and is utterly going to ruin in their hands. They have neither skill nor intelligence, but rely entirely upon indolence and chance. They go to war decked out as if for a wedding, bent on meat and drink and the gratification of their lust. They think much more of flight than they do of victory. Their skill lies not in striking the adversary, but in holding out the hand of submission; not in terrifying the enemy, but in pleasing the eyes of their mistresses. But even these false notions may be excused in view of the utter ignorance and want of instruction on the part of those who hold them.

Such are the times, my friend, upon which we have fallen; such is the period in which we live and are growing old. Such are the critics of today, as I so often have occasion to lament and complain – men who are innocent of knowledge or virtue, and yet harbour the most exalted opinion of themselves. Not content with losing the words of the ancients, they must attack their genius and their ashes. They rejoice in their ignorance, as if what they did not know were not worth knowing.

*Desiderius Erasmus to Richard Whitford, an English – or Welsh – catholic priest, author of several devotional works. The letter was written in 1506 and shows Erasmus' great admiration for his friend Thomas More.*

For several years, dearest Richard, I have been entirely occupied with Greek literature; but lately, in order to resume my intimacy with Latin, I have begun to declaim in that language. In so doing I have yielded to the influence of Thomas More, whose eloquence, as you know, is such, that he could persuade even an enemy to do whatever he pleased, while my own affection for the man is so great, that if he bade me dance a hornpipe, I should do at once just as he bade me. He is writing on the same subject, and in such a way as to thresh out and sift every part of it. For I do not think, unless the vehemence of my love leads me astray, that Nature ever formed a mind more present, ready, sharp-sighted and subtle, or in a word more absolutely furnished with every kind of faculty than his. Add to this a power of expression equal to his intellect, a singular cheerfulness of character and an abundance of wit, but only of the

candid sort; and you miss nothing that should be found in a perfect advocate. I have therefore not undertaken this task with any idea of either surpassing or matching such an artist, but only to break a lance as it were in this tourney of wits with the sweetest of all my friends, with whom I am always pleased to join in any employment grave or gay. I have done this all the more willingly, because I very much wish this sort of exercise to be introduced into our schools, where it would be of the greatest utility. For in the want of this practice I find the reason why at this time, while there are many eloquent writers, there are so few scholars, who do not appear almost mute, whenever an orator is required, whereas if, in pursuance both of the authority of Cicero and Fabius and of the examples of the ancients, we were diligently practised from boyhood in such exercises, there would not, surely, be such poverty of speech, such pitiable hesitation, such shameful stammering, as we witness even in those who publicly profess the art of Oratory. You will read my declamation with the thought that it has been the amusement of a very few days, not a serious composition. I advise you also to compare it with More's, and so determine whether there is any difference of style between those, whom you used to declare to be so much alike in genius, character, tastes and studies, that no twin brothers could be found more closely resembling one another. I am sure you love them both alike, and are in turn equally dear to both. Farewell, most charming Richard.  
In the country, the 1st of May, 1506.

*Thomas More to Martin Dorpius. The letter was written in 1515. In it, apart from showing great appreciation for his friend Erasmus, More discusses and compares the merits of various Italian, English, Flemish and French universities and academies.*

... I do not think there can be any doubt, what is Erasmus' feeling about the Universities, in which he has studied and taught, not Grammar only, but many other things more important to all Christians. Who does not know how long he resided at Paris, and how much he was esteemed there, as also at Padua and Bologna, not to speak of Rome, which I regard as the chief of all Academies? Oxford and Cambridge have that love for him, which is due to one who has passed some time in both with great profit to students and great credit to himself. Both invite him to return, both are desirous of transplanting him into the number of their own theologians, as he has already obtained that degree elsewhere. I do not know what may be your estimate of our Universities, when you attribute so much importance to Paris and Louvain, that you seem to leave nothing at all for the rest of mankind, especially with regard to Logic; for you say that, but for the theologians of both those Universities, the Dialectic science would for many ages have been banished from the world. Seven years ago I saw something of both those Academies. My visits were not long, but while there, I took some pains to know what subjects were taught in each, and what was

the manner of teaching. And, although I respect them both, I have not found, by what I heard when I was there or by enquiry from others, any reason to prefer, that my own children, for whose education I wish to do my best, should be taught in either of them rather than at Oxford or at Cambridge. I will not however deny, that our students owe much to James Lefèvre of Paris, who has been welcomed everywhere by the happier intellects and saner judgments among us, as the restorer of true Dialectic and true Philosophy, especially that founded upon Aristotle. By his teaching Paris may seem in some sort to repay an old obligation to our own country, by reviving among us lessons originally received from us – an admitted obligation, which even Gaguin – no detractor from the glory of France or trumpeter of that of England – has commemorated in his Annals. It is much to be wished that the students of Louvain and also of Paris would all accept the commentaries of Lefèvre upon Aristotle's Dialectic. Their teaching, if I am not mistaken, would be less controversial and more accurate.  
Bruges, 21 October, 1515

*Thomas More in London to Desiderius Erasmus in Basel. In this letter, written in June, 1516, More replies modestly to Erasmus' appreciative remarks on More's style and expresses the wish that Erasmus may soon come back to London. The Cardinal mentioned here as addressee of a letter and of some books from Erasmus is Woolsey.*

You bid me, my dear Erasmus, to write fully to you about every thing, which I am all the more disposed to do, as I understand you were pleased with my former letter, as a proof of my love. But when you say that you were also pleased with it because it showed my proficiency in power of expression, you invite me at once to be silent. For how can I be disposed to write to you, if my letters are to be curiously weighed and examined? And when you compliment me on my scholarship, I blush to think, how much I am losing every day of the less than little I ever had; which cannot but be the case with one constantly engaged in legal disputations so remote from every kind of learning. If therefore you weigh my words, that is to say, if you count my errors and barbarisms, you bid me hold my tongue; but if you are content to hear about your business and mine in whatever speech comes to my pen, I will tell you first about your money, as of most importance.

...

The lord Cardinal received your letter and the books you sent him, with much appearance of pleasure, and promises most liberally what I hope he will perform.

I am truly glad on your account, that Basel is so agreeable to you in every way, as I would have you find everywhere what you like best, but not so as to shut us off entirely from you. If we cannot furnish the conveniences they supply, we certainly do not yield to them in love. I have read through

the bundle of letters, written by learned men who approach you with the veneration you deserve, but I find nothing strange in that.

Pace is not come back, nor is he as yet expected. I have no doubt you know he is made King's Secretary. I hear you have met Tunstall, and have been his guest, since he has become Master of the Rolls. As to our small verses I say nothing; please settle the matter for me. I want to know what you think of my epistle to Dorpius. Farewell, dearest Erasmus. My Clement sends his best greetings to you.

*Thomas More in London to Desiderius Erasmus in Brussels. The letter was written in October, 1516, just before the first edition of Utopia appeared in Louvain. More had sent Erasmus a copy of his work and in this letter he is seeking acknowledgement from him.*

I have received your letter written at Calais, by which I gather that you had a favourable crossing; and the Provost of Cassel has reported to me that you had arrived safe at Brussels before he left home; for he is now here on a diplomatic mission.

...

I sent you the *Nowhere* some time ago;<sup>1</sup> and I am glad to think it will soon come out in a handsome form, with a magnificent recommendation; and that, if possible by many, not only men of letters, but also of political celebrity, principally on account of one person (whose name I suppress, but I think it will occur to you) who, from some feeling or other which I leave you to guess, is sorry to see it published without the prescribed nine years' delay. These matters you will arrange as you think most to my advantage; but I long to know whether you have shown it to Tunstall, or have at any rate described it to him, as I think you have done. This I prefer, as his pleasure will be doubled; the thing will appear more elegant in your narration than in my description, and you will save him the trouble of reading it!

Farewell.

*Juan Luis Vives writes to Erasmus. The letter was sent from Bruges on 18 March, 1517. Its most important topic is the information Vives gives Erasmus about the Spanish translation which is being made of Erasmus' Enchiridion.*

While I was waiting every day for a letter from you, almost an age has gone by, and while hoping for something from you to which I could reply, I have missed many an opportunity to write. In fact, I have already written two or three times and am now beginning to feel uneasy about your silence; either my letters have not been delivered or you are overwhelmed with work. This or something else must be the reason you did not write. But none of that matters

if you are in good health and have not forgotten me entirely. If you remember me and keep a place for me in your heart, that is enough for me. That you should demonstrate your feelings by sending me a letter as a sort of affidavit, that does not matter to me at all.

I do not know what news you have from Paris about your affairs. The dean says he got a letter from you, in which you bewail what is happening here. But all the university people who come here from Paris testify to the great esteem in which you are held by everyone, even by those who used to hate you most bitterly. In Spain your *Enchiridion* has begun to speak our language and with the full approval of the people whom the brothers<sup>2</sup> used to keep under their thumb. There is talk now of doing the same about the Paraphrases.

...

If you see any of the books I have published in your absence, please, dear master, write and give me your opinion of them, or rather, act like a teacher or a father and send me your criticisms and advice, for I can think of nothing more helpful than criticism from a wise friend. Indeed, even criticism from a foolish or hostile person does no harm. I wish you were closer at hand, so that I could consult you like an oracle.

If it is the Lord's will, I shall leave shortly for Britain. If there is anything you would like me to do, just say so and it will be done. If you have nothing specific to request, I have a general idea about what you want – there is no need to explain. Look after your health and do not cease to love me. Sincere and respectful greetings from your friends Laurinus and Fevijn. Farewell.

*Niccolò Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori. In 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli was accused of conspiracy against the Medici, imprisoned and tortured. When, after a few weeks, he was released, he retired in his estate in Sant'Andrea in Percussina. In this letter, which dates from December 10, 1513, he informs Francesco Vettori, Florentine ambassador to the Pope and his benefactor, about his activities while in Sant'Andrea. This letter is an important historical document, for Machiavelli tells his friend that at night he has been writing a booklet called De principatibus. As is well known, Il principe was to be published posthumously, only in 1532.*

Magnificent Ambassador. Divine graces were never late.<sup>3</sup> I say this because I seemed to have lost, or mislaid, your favour since you had not written to me for a long time; and I was wondering what the reason could be. And I took little account of all those which came to my mind, except when I feared that you had discontinued writing because somebody had written to you that I was not a good keeper of your letters; and I knew that, except Filippo and Pagolo, nobody had seen them by my doing. But again I found your favour in your last letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of last month, from which I am happy to know how properly and quietly you carry on this public office; and I encourage

you to continue so because he who gives up his own convenience for the convenience of others loses his own and gets no gratitude from those. And since fortune wants to do everything, one should let her do, be quiet and not trouble her, and wait for the time when she will allow men to do something; and then it will be time for you to make some effort, to watch things better, and for me to leave my farm and say: here I am. I can only, therefore, since I wish to reciprocate your favour, tell you what my life is here; and if you think that you would like to exchange it with mine, I will be happy to swap.

I am staying in my farm, and since my recent unhappy fate,<sup>4</sup> I have not spent twenty days altogether in Florence. Up till now, I have been snaring thrushes with my own hands. I used to get up before daylight, prepare birdlime, go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I looked like Geta when he was returning from the harbour with Amphitryon's books;<sup>5</sup> I used to catch at least two thrushes and up to six. And so I did all the month of September. Then this pastime, annoying and strange as it is, ended up, to my displeasure. And of what kind my life is, I will tell you. I get up in the morning with the sun and go into a grove which I am having cut down, where I remain two hours revising the works of the past day, and spend some time with the cutters, who have always some misfortune to tell.

...

When I leave the grove, I go to a spring and thence to my aviary. I have a book with me, either Dante or Petrarch, or one of the lesser poets, such as Tibullus, Ovid and the like: I read of their amorous passions, and their loves remind me of mine: I enjoy myself a while in such thoughts. Then I move along the road to the inn; I speak with those who pass, and ask for news from their villages; I hear about various things and note various tastes and different fancies of men. In the meantime the hour of dining arrives and then with my family I eat such food as this poor farm and my small property allows. After eating, I go back to the inn: there is usually the host, a butcher, a miller, two furnace tenders. With these I sink into vulgarity for the whole day playing *cricca* and *tric-trac*, and from these games a thousand disputes and countless insults with offensive words are born; and most of the times the dispute is over a penny, and our shouts are heard as far as San Casciano. And so, wallowing among these lice, I keep my brain from growing mouldy and escape the malice of my fate being glad that it treads me in this way, to see if in the end it will be ashamed.

When evening comes, I return to my house and enter my study; and, at the door, I dismiss the day's clothing, covered with mud and dust, and put on regal and courtly garments; and, appropriately attired, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men where, welcomed by them with affection, I feed on that food which *solum* is mine, and which I was born for; where I am not ashamed to speak with them and ask them the reasons of their actions; and they, out of kindness, answer me; and for four hours I do not feel any boredom, forget all trouble, am not afraid of poverty, am not frightened by death; entirely, I give myself over to them.

And since Dante says that no knowledge is produced when we hear but do not remember,<sup>6</sup> I have taken note of all that I have treasured by their conversation, and have composed a little book *De principatibus*; where I go as deeply as I can into considerations on this subject, debating what principedoms are, of what kinds, how they are gained, how kept and why they are lost. And if you ever liked any of my extravagances, this one should not displease you; and by a prince, and especially a new prince, it should be welcomed: therefore I am dedicating it to His Magnificence Giuliano.<sup>7</sup>

...

I have talked with Filippo<sup>8</sup> of this pamphlet of mine, whether it would be good to give it or not give it; and if it is good to give it, whether it would be good to take it myself or send it. Not giving it would make me fear that Giuliano would not read it and that this Ardinghelli<sup>9</sup> would get himself honour from this latest work of mine. The giving it was forced by the necessity that drives me, because I am spending all my money and cannot remain as I am a long time without becoming despised owing to my poverty. In addition, I wish that these Medici lords would start making use of me, even if they would begin making me roll a stone; because then, if I did not gain their favour, it would be my fault; and through this thing, if it were read, it would be seen that the fifteen years which I have spent studying the art of the state, I have not slept or played; and everyone should care to get the services of one who has got full experience at the expense of others. And of my honesty no one should doubt, because, having always preserved my honesty, I shall hardly learn now how to break it; and he who has been honest and good for forty-three years, which is my age, cannot change his nature; and of my honesty and goodness my poverty is witness. I should like therefore that you wrote me what you think of this matter and I send you my regards. *Sis felix.*

*Die 10 Decembris 1513.*

*In a letter dating from June 18, 1568, Michel de Montaigne writes to his father, Pierre Eyquem, Seigneur de Montaigne, about a translation from the Spanish of a work by Raymond Sebond, a Catalan theologian and philosopher, in which he has been engaged. Apparently, the translation had been suggested to Montaigne by his father.*

To Monseigneur, Monseigneur de Montaigne  
Monseigneur,

in obedience to your commands last year at your home of Montaigne, I have with my own hands put that great Spanish divine and philosopher, Raymond Sebond, into a French dress, and have, as much as lay in my power, stripped him of that rough mien and unpolished aspect, which he first appeared in to you; so that, in my opinion, he is now comely and genteel enough to

appear in the best of company. It is possible that some over-curious reader may perceive that he has got a little of the Gascon turn and feature; but they may be the more ashamed of their own negligence, in suffering a person quite a novice and a learner, to get the start of them in this work. Now, Monseigneur, it is but reason it should be published to the world, and have credit of your name, because what amendment and reformation it has, is all owing to you. Yet I plainly perceive that, if you should please to settle accounts with him, you will be very much his debtor; since, in exchange for his excellent and most religious discourses, of his sublime and, as it were, divine conceptions, it will appear that you have only brought him words and language, a merchandize so mean and common, that he who has the greatest stock of it is peradventure the worse for it.

Monseigneur, I pray God to grant you a very long and happy life.

Paris, this 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 1568.

Your most humble and obedient son,

Michel de Montaigne

*Veronica Franco writes to a friend who has sent her four sonnets, reciprocating with two of her own. From Lettere familiari a diversi (Familiar Letters to Various People), 1580. In this, which is the first edition of Franco's letters, neither the date of the letter nor the name of Veronica's poet friend are mentioned.*

Since I cannot praise enough your Lordship's divine writing and the sonnets you have composed, conforming so closely to the strictures of rhyme, or even find the words to thank you as I should for the many honours and favours I received from you, I shall keep silently in the depth of my soul my admiration for your skill and the memory of what I owe you. And I shall let it pass that you begin ennobling comparisons of the lowliest possible object that can be chosen for praise so that the light of your famous style burns all the more brightly, though it does not need such help at all, and you continue to enjoy the pleasure that every really noble heart feels at behaving courteously, especially towards ladies. May your gentle thought be happy as you turn over in your mind the generous favour and great liberality you have granted me. If I fail to deserve them in any other way, I do because I need the help of another's kind praises when I lack any of my own, even though such praise makes me uneasy because I so admire the skill of its makers, equal (if any equal can be found) to your Lordship.

To whom as a sign of my gratitude, though warned against it by my judgment, I send two sonnets written in the same rhymes as your four. I, too, would have written four, which, though they would not be worth a single one of yours, would at least show that I am eager to learn. For I work so hard at them, longing to reveal my soul, which corresponds in such writ-

ing neither to the desire nor the need to return such graces and favours. May your Lordship make up for my lack with your skill and, wherever I may be, I will still be yours. Do me the favour, as your servant, of making me worthy of your commands, which I am sorry not to be able to fulfill by coming to you today, as I had planned to do, taking the occasion to visit my aunt the nun. But something has come up that keeps me from it. So, against my will, I must stay in this city for the time being.

*In this consolatory letter to the Lady Kingsmel, written on 26 October, 1624, John Donne, following the death of the Lady's husband, dwells on the meaning of death for a Christian.*

To the Honourable L. the Lady Kingsmel upon the death of her Husband  
Madame,  
Those things which God dissolves at once, as he shall do the Sun, and Moon, and those bodies at the last conflagration, he never intends to reunite again; but in those things, which he takes in pieces, as he doth man, and wife, in these divorces by death, and in single persons, by the divorce of body and soul, God hath another purpose to make them up again. That piece which he takes to himself, is presently cast in a mould, and in an instant made fit for his use; for heaven is not a place of a proficiency, but of present perfection. That piece which he leaves behinde in this world, by the death of a part thereof, growes fitter and fitter for him, by the good use of his corrections, and the intire conformity to his will. Nothing disproportions us, nor makes us so incapable of being reunited to those whom we loved here, as murmuring, or not advancing the goodness of him, who hath removed them from hence. We would wonder, to see a man, who in a wood were left to his liberty, to fell what trees he would, take onely the crooked, and leave the streightest trees; but that man hath perchance a ship to build, and not a house, and so hath use of that kinde of timber: let not us, who know that in Gods house there are many Mansions, but yet have no modell, no designe of the forme of that building, wonder at his taking in of his materialls, why he takes the young, and leaves the old, or why the sickly overlive those that had better health. We are not bound to think that souls departed, have devested all affections towards them, whom they left here; but we are bound to think, that for all their loves they would not be here again: Then is the will of God done in Earth, as it is in Heaven, when we neither pretermit his actions, nor resist them; neither pass them over in an inconsideration, as though God had no hand in them, nor go about to take them out of his hands, as though we could direct him to do them better. As Gods Scriptures are his will, so his actions are his will; both are Testaments, because they testifie his minde to us. It is not lawfull to adde a scedule to either of his wills: as they

do ill, who adde to his written will, the Scriptures, a scedule of Apocryphall books, so do they also, who to his other will, his manifested actions, adde Apocryphall conditions, and a scedule of such limitations as these, If God would have stayed thus long, or, If God would have proceeded in this or this manner, I could have born it. To say that our afflictions are greater then we can bear, is so near to despairing, as that the same words express both; for when we consider *Caines* words in that originall tongue in which God spake, we cannot tell whether the words be, My punishment is greater then can be born; or, My sin is greater then can be forgiven. But, Madame, you who willingly sacrificed your self to God, in your obedience to him, in your own sickness, cannot be doubted to dispute with him about any part of you which he shall be pleased to require at your hands. The difference is great in the loss of an arme, or a head; of a child, or a husband: but to them, who are incorporated into Christ, their head, there can be no beheading; upon you, who are a member of the spouse of Christ, the Church, there can fall no widowhead, nor orphanage upon those children to whom God is father. I have not another office by your husbands death, for I was your Chaplaine before, in my daily prayers; but I shall inlarge that office with other Collects then before, that God will continue to you, that peace which you have ever had in him, and send you quiet, and peaceable dispositions in all them with whom you shall have any thing to do in your temporall estate and matters of this world. *Amen.*

Your Ladiships very humble and  
thankfull servant in Christ Jesus J. Donne.  
At my poor house at S.  
Pauls. 26. Octob. 1624

*In a letter written on 2 September, 1637, John Milton writes to Carlo Diodati, his school mate and friend from childhood, complaining about his friend's long silence. Diodati belonged to a Calvinist family originally from Lucca. In 1629 Milton composed an elegy in Latin for his friend (Elegia Prima, 'Ad Carolum Diodatum').*

I now see plainly that you mean to vanquish me by being obstinately silent; if so, take your triumph, for I write first! But if we shall ever happen to argue, why neither has written to the other 'for this long while,' take care lest you have to own, that I am much the more excusable: 'I being naturally slow and lazy about writing,' as you well know, whereas, you, on the contrary, whether through nature or habit, have not in general to be dragged to literary 'addresses' of this kind. Besides, this is in my favour, that I know your method of study to be so arranged, that you frequently stop to breathe; that you visit your friends; write much; occasionally take a journey:

whereas my disposition is such, that no impediment, no rest or care for rest, no reflection, prevents me from continuing in my course, until I bring my study to a full period. From this cause, and from no other, (by your leave!) it happens, that although I tardily approach duties which I would rather postpone, yet, my friend, I am no loiterer in answering; and it has never happened through my neglect of writing, that a letter should not be due from you. What! you, as I hear, can write frequently to your bookseller, and to your brother, either of whom are near enough to hand me your letters, if there were any. But I chiefly complain, that you did not fulfil your promise, of stopping to see me, when you left the city; and this breach of faith (if you once thought of your engagement,) gave you an almost unavoidable topic for a letter. I think I may justly tax you with these matters. You will say what you may judge proper in reply. But in the mean time I prythee how are you? are you well? what smatterers have you to associate and converse with, as we used to do when do you return? how long do you intend to remain among the 'hyperboreans'? I wish you to reply to each of these interrogatories. And lest you should not be apprised that I have your welfare still at heart, know that, in the beginning of Autumn, I went out of my road to inquire of your brother what you were about; and lately, when somebody, I forget who, told me in London that you were in the city, I forthwith, and 'at the first sound,' sped to your lodgings; but it was the 'dream of a shadow', for you were not to be seen. Wherefore, if it be no inconvenience, make haste to return, and settle yourself in some situation, that may afford a prospect, that by some possibility, we may occasionally see each other; for I would not care that we should be neighbours on any other condition; I a rustic, and you a cit: 'but this as God pleases'. I have many things to tell you of myself, and my studies, but would rather communicate it to you in person. I am going to the country tomorrow, and should be preparing; so that I can scarcely throw these sentences coherently together. Farewell.

*Jean Racine wrote the following letter to the Abbot Le Vasseur, one of his college friends, in 1660. The two friends had been discussing a sonnet by Racine and apparently Le Vasseur was not entirely content with it. Following their discussion, Racine decided to reshape his sonnet and sent the new version to his friend.*

Thursday morning,

I send to you my sonnet, that is, a new sonnet; for I so deeply changed it last night that you will not recognize it. But I believe that you will not approve of it either. Indeed, what makes it unrecognizable is what should make it more agreeable to you, because I have disfigured it in such a way only to make it more beautiful and more consistent with the rules which you dictated to me yesterday, which are the very rules of the sonnet. You found strange

that the end was so different from the beginning. This surprised me no less than it surprised you; for in this poets resemble hypocrites, that they always vindicate what they do, although their conscience never allows them to rest: I was in the same position. I had fully acknowledged this flaw although I made all possible efforts to show that it was not a flaw; but the strength of your arguments, added to those of my conscience, in the end convinced me. I sided with reason and I also sided my sonnet with reason. I changed its *pointe* [climax], which is the most important part in such compositions. I almost wrote a new sonnet; and although so dissimilar from the first, I will find it difficult to disown it. My conscience does not blame me any more, and I consider this a good omen. I hope it satisfies you as well; and I send it to you in this hope. I would be happy if you found it worthy to be read by M.lle Lucrèce, and I would believe it not to be unworthy of his eminence. Go back to the countryside as late as you can. You see how important your presence is.

### 3. *Players*

*The following letters, exchanged between Edward Alleyn and the Henslowe family, were written in 1593, during the plague epidemic which, since the previous year, had been devastating the city of London. In that period, since the London theatres were closed to avoid contagion, Alleyn was engaged in a provincial tour together with Lord Strange's Men and some players belonging to the Admiral's Men. Although Alleyn's letters are addressed mainly to his wife Joan, Henslowe's daughter, the replies always come from Philip Henslowe. This shows that Joan could not write, but also demonstrates Henslowe's power of impersonation in his capacity as go-between, especially when he uses the affectionate nicknames exchanged by husband and wife either to address Alleyn or to refer to his daughter, or even provides the signature 'Your lovinge wiffe to comande tell death'. Apart from constituting important historical documents about the London theatrical groups when travelling in the provinces and about those who remained at home under the threat of sickness, these letters would deserve critical attention precisely as letters, because they present a 'triangular' relationship and also because of the ways in which addresser and addressee construct the personality of Joan, the 'silent' sender-receiver.*

*Edward Alleyn to his wife. The following letter was written from Bristol on 1 August, 1593.*

My good sweett mouse J comend me hartely to you And to my father my mother & my sister bess hopinge in god thought the siknes be round about you yett by his mercy itt may escape your house which by the grace of god it shall therfor vse this corse kepe your house fayr and clean wich J knowe you will and every evening throwe water before your dore and in your bakesid and haue in

your windowes good store of rwe and herbe of grace and with all the grace of god wich must be obtaynd by prayers and so doinge no dout but the lord will mercyfully defend you: now good mouse J haue no newse to send you but this thatt we haue all our helth for which the lord be prayesed J reseved your letter att bristo by richard couley for the wich J thank you J haue sent you by this berer Thomas popes kinsman my whit wascote because it is a trobell to me to cary it reseave it with this letter And lay it vp for me till J com if you send any mor letters send to me by the cariers of shrowsbery or to west chester or to york to be keptt till my Lord stranges players com and thus sweett hartt with my harty comendations to all our frends J sess from bristo this wensday after saint Jams his day being redy to begin the playe of hary of cornwall mouse do my harty comendations to mr grigshis wif and all his houshold and to my sister phillyps  
Your Loving housband E Alleyn

mouse you send me no newes of any things you should send of your domestycall matters such things as hapens att home as how your distilled watter proves or this or that or any thing what you will and Jug J pray you Lett my orayng tawny stokin of wolen be dyed a very good blak against J com hom to wear in the winter you sente me nott word of my garden but next tym you will but remember this in any case that all that bed which was parsley in the month of september you sowe itt with spinage for then is the tym; J would do it my self but we shall nott com hom till allholand tyd and so swett mouse farwell and broke our Long Journey with patiencc

This be delyvered to mr hinslo on of the gromes of hir majesty's chamber dwelling on the bank sid right over against the clink

*Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyne. The letter dates from August, 1593.*

Welbeloved Sonne edward allen After ovr hartie Comendationes bothe J & your mother & syster bease all in generall dothe hartieley comende vs vnto you & as for you mowse her comendationes comes by yt seallfe which as she sayes comes from her harte & her sowle prainge to god daye & nyght for your good heallth which trewley to be playne we doe soe alle hoopinge in the lorde Jesus that we shall haue agayne a mery meting for J thanke god we haue be flytted with feare of the sycknes but thankes be vnto god we are all this time in good healte in ovr howsse but Rownd a bowte vs yt hathe bene all moste in every howsse about vs & wholle howsholdes deyed & yt my frend the baylle doth scape but he smelles monstrusly for feare & dares staye no wheare for ther hathe deyed this laste weacke in generall 1603 of the which number ther hathe died of them of the plage 113-0-5 which hause bene the greatest that came yet & as for other newes of this & that J cane tealle youe none

but that Robert brownes wife in shordech & all her chelldren & howshowld be dead & heare dores sheat vpe & as for your Joyner he hath browght you a corte coberd & hath seat vp your portowle in the chamber & sayes you shall have a good bead stead & as for your garden yt is weall & your spenege bead not forgotten your orange colerd stockens died but no market in smythfylld nether to bye your cloth nor yet to sealle your horsse for no mane wold ofer me a bove fower pownd for hime therfor J wold not sealle hime but haue seante hime in to the contrey tulle youe Retorne backe agayene this licke poore peapell Reioysinge that the lorde hath in compased vs Rownd & kepeth vs all in health we end prayinge to god to seand you all good health that yet maye please god to send that we maye all merelye meat & J praye you do ower comendationes vnto them all & J wold gladley heare the licke frome them & thankes be to god your poore mowse hath not ben seack seance you want.

Your lovinge wiffe tulle  
death Jone allen

Your poore & a sured frend  
tell death Phillipe Hensley

To my wealle loved Sonne Edward allen one of my lorde Stranges Players this be delyuered with spead

*Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyn. The letter dates from August 14, 1593*

Jesus

welbeloued Sonne edwarde allen J and your mother & your sister Beasse haue all in generale our hartie commendations vnto you & verey glad to heare of your good healthe which we praye god to conetenew longe to his will & pleassur for we hard that you weare very sycke at bathe & that one of your felowes weare fayne to playe your parte for you which wasse no lytell greafe vnto vs to heare but thanckes be to god for amendmente for we feared yt mvche because we had no leatter frome you when the other wifes had leatters sente which mad your mowse not to weape a lyttell but tocke yt very greauesly thinckinge yt you hade conseed some vnkindnes of her because you weare ever wont to write with the firste & J praye ye do so styll for we wold all be sorey but to heare as often frome you as others do frome ther frendes for we wold write oftener to you then we doo but we knowe not whether to sende to you therfor J praye you forgeat not your mowse & vs for you seant in one leatter that we Rettorned not answeare wheather we Receued them or no for we Receued one which you made at seant James tide wher in mackes mensyon of your whitte wascote & your Ivte bockes & other thinges which we haue Receued & now lastly a leater which peter browghte with your horsse which J wilbe as carfull as J cane Jn yt now sonne althowge longe yt at the laste J Remember a hundered comendations from your mowse which Js very glade

to heare of your health & prayeth daye & nyght to the lord to conteneue the same & lickewisse prayeth vnto the lord to seace his hand frome punyshenge vs with his crosse that she mowght haue you at home with her hopinge hopinge then that you shold be eased of this heavey labowre & toylle & you sayd in your leater that she seant you not worde howe your garden & all your things dothe prosper very well thanckes be to god for your beanes are growen to hey headge & well coded & all other thinges doth very well but your tenantes weax very power for they cane paye no Reant nor will paye no Rent whill myhellmas next & then we shall haue yt yf we cane geat yt & lyckewisse your Joyner comendes hime vnto you and sayes he will mack you such good stufe and suche good peneworthes as he hoopeth shall weall licke you & contente you which J hope he will do because he sayes he will prove hime seallfe ane onest man & for your good counsell which you gawe vs in your leater we all thank you which wasse for kepinge of our howsse cleane & warringe of our dores & strainge our windowes with wormwode & Rewe which J hope all this we do & more for we strowe yt withe hartie prayers vnto the lorde which vnto vs Js more avaylable then all thinges eallsse in the world for J prayse the lord god for yt we are all in very good health & J praye ye sonne comend me harteley to all the Reast of your fealwes in generall for J growe poore for lacke of them therfor haue no geaftes to sende but as good & faythfull a harte as they shall desyer to haue comen a mongeste theme nowe sonne we thank you all for your tokenes you seant vs and as for newes of the sycknes J cane not seand you no Juste note of yt be cause there is commandment to the contrary but as J thincke doth die with in the sitteye and with out of all syckneses to the number of seuten or eyghten hundreth in one weacke & this praynge to god for your health J ende frome london the 14 of aguste 1593

Your lovinge wiffe to  
comande tell death  
Johne Allen

Your lovinge ffather & mother  
to owr powers P H A

Too my wealbeloued husbände mr Edwarde Allen on of my lorde stranges players this to be delyuered with speade.

*Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyn. The letter dates from 28 September, 1593*

Righte wealbeloued Sonne edward allen J & your mother & your sisster beasse haue all in generall our hartie Comendations vnto you & as for your wiffe & mowsse she desieres to send heare Comendationes alone wich she sayes Comes ffrome heare very harte but as ffor your wellfare & heallth we do all Joyne to geather in Joye and ReJoyse ther att & do all to geather with one

consent praye to god longe to conteneu the same now sonne leate vs growe to alyttell vnkindnes with you becausse we cane not heare frome you as we wold do that is when others do & if we cold as sartenlye send to you as you maye to vs we wold not leat to vesete you often ffor we beinge with in the crosse of the lorde you littell knowe howe we do but by sendinge for yt hath pleased the lorde to vesette me Rownd a bout & almoste alle my nebores dead of the plage & not my howsse ffree for my two weanches haue had the plage & yet thankes be to god leueth & are welle & J my wiffe & my two dawghters J thanke god ar very well & in good heallth now to caste a waye vnkindnes & to come to owr newes that is that we had a very bade market at smyth fylld for no mane wold ofer a bove fower pownd for your horsse & therfor haue not sowld hime but to saue carges J haue sent him downe Jn to the contrey ther to be keapte tell you Retorne & as for your clocke cloth ther wasse none sowld by Retaylle for all wasse bowght vp by wholle saylle in to dayes so the fayer lasted but iij dayes & as for yowr stockings they are deyed & yor Joyner hath seate vp your portolle in the chamber & hath brothe you a corte cobert & sayes he will bringe the Reaste very shortley & we beare with hime because his howsse is visited & as for your garden that is very weall your spenege bead & all sowed...

...

& this J eand praysinge god that it doth pleass him of his mersey to slacke his hand frome visietinge vs & the sittie of london for ther hath abated this last two weacke of the sycknes iij hundredth thurtie and five & hath died Jn all betwext a leuen and twealle hundred this laste weack which J hoop Jn the lord yt will conteneu in seasynge euery weacke that we maye Rejoyssse agayne at owr meatinge & this with my hartie comendations to thy own seall & lickwise to all the Reaste of my felowes J genereall J praye you hartily comende me from london the 28 of septmb 1593

Your asured owne seallfe

Tell deathe Joanne allen

Commending to her mvnshen

Your lovinge father & frend to my power

tell death Phillipe Henslow

your wiffe prayeth you to send her word in your next leater what goodman hudson payes you yerley for his Reante for he hause the sealer and all stille in his hand & as for your tenenantes we cane geat no Rent & as for greges & his wife hath ther comendations vnto you & your sister phillipes & her husband hath leced two or thre owt of ther howsse yt they in good health & doth hartily comend them vnto you

This be delyuerd vnto my welbeloued husband mr edward alien one of my lord stranges players geue wth spede

*The following letters by Comici dell'Arte, apart from dealing with the financial and logistic difficulties in which the companies often found themselves, illustrate one particular aspect of the relationships within each company and between different companies of comici: their feelings of rivalry and the ways in which they communicated their mutual grudge to their patron or his close collaborators. The main company is that of the 'Accesi', led by Pier Maria Cecchini, often in sharp contrast with that of the 'Fedeli', led by Giovan Battista Andreini, both in the service of the Gonzaga dukes in Mantua. It is to be noted that in almost all their letters, the comici refer to themselves and to their companions not with their actual names but with the names of the characters they impersonated. Thus, Fritellino or Frittellino is to be identified with Pier Maria Cecchini, Flaminia with his wife Orsola, while Lelio is Giovan Battista Andreini and Florinda his wife Virginia Ramponi. Arlecchino, in turn, is the celebrated 'zanni' Tristano Martinelli. Virginia Rotari, Andreini's second wife, was surnamed 'Baldina', but her role name was Lidia. Ricciolina is the role name of a maid-servant, but the identity of this particular performer is uncertain. Inevitably, the translation normalizes texts (especially those by Cecchini) which appear to have been written under the spur of necessity and in haste and have therefore special characteristics of style, rhetoric, lexicon and construction.*

*The three letters which open this selection were written in September, 1606, by Pier Maria Cecchini and Giovan Battista Andreini to their patron Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua and to his gentleman usher Silvio Andreasi. Cecchini, the elder of the two, and Andreini both manifest the rivalries and the resentment which was to characterize their personal and professional relationships for years.<sup>10</sup>*

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 11 September, 1606.*

My most serene Lordship,

The subterfuge and persecutions which come from Florinda and her husband and their abuse are so great that they have led me to ruin and made me fall into a ravine.

They send me advice to remain in Milan the whole winter, and since I do not think it would be right and I say I will not stay, Florinda's husband has led me to fight, which would have happened if God had not helped.

All the same, they want to stay, and they talk about fetching certain *comici* who are in this area and ask them to remain with them till Christmas, and then let them go and come with us to serve Your Highness in time of Carnival; which, if it happens, I, too, will be obliged to gather a company and keep it until that time in order to perform where I promised to go. But since I never want to act if not advised by your consent, I am sending the present message so that Your Highness may advise me about what to do; and, in case they have written talking foul about me (or saying anything contrary to what I am writing), I pray Your Highness to charge a Cavaliere here to hear both him and me, and the one who

will be found wrong will be excluded from your service because undeserving of it. However, Your Highness may appreciate that we cannot stay together because things are so serious, and their behaviour is such as I cannot say, because there are things which only can be said in your presence...I did not want to say so much, but I am assured that I am speaking to a master who will not neglect my message and who will easily understand everything. I have been asking my companions to sign a letter or certify what happened and I will send it to Your Highness, to whom I humbly bow.

From Milan, 11 September 1606

Your Highness' most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

*Giovan Battista Andreini to Silvio Andreasi. The letter dates from 20 September, 1606*

My most illustrious Lordship,

For my good deeds the company stoned me to death. I wish you to know that I turn to you, most kind sir, together with my wife, entreating you to bow to the duke my most serene highness and deliver the attached letter, together with the present unsealed message, in which your lordship will read what I am writing. I was persuaded to do this because that cheat Frittellino has cheated so well with the most serene Highness of Mantua that his Highness was led to dismiss me: therefore I ask your lordship to deliver my reasons to his Highness and let him know by word of mouth that I will set out with the company and will come to Mantua because it is too strange that a liar be believed better than a poor young man. I professed to be Your most serene Highness' servant, an honourable servant, as the city of Milan will witness; but now I shut my mouth hoping that your lordship will make all efforts now that we are so much in need, for the love which your lordship grants us. My wife bows to you and I do the same, entreating your help, so that when I arrive in Mantua I may be seen with good will.

From Milan, 20 September, 1606

Your most illustrious Lordship's

Most humble servant

Giovan Battista Andreini

*Giovan Battista Andreini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The following letter accompanies the previous one and dates from 20 September, 1606*

Most Serene Highness,

pardon me if my pen dares so much as to venture, by bowing to you, to write and recall that I never wrote about the company but in good terms, as is witnessed by two letters I wrote to signor Silvio Andreasi, since I never wrote to anyone else.

Now it has been told me by Frittellino that Your Highness dictates that, if I do not want to follow the company, I am free to leave it; hearing this, I imagined I have been very badly represented to your Highness, and therefore I decided to let you know my position in a short letter which (if you do not spurn to read) will be shown to you by the same Signor Silvio Andreasi. And with this, I wish you the summit of the highest graces from God Our Lord.

From Milan, 20 September, 1606

Your Most Serene Highness'

Most humble servant

Giovan Battista Andreini

*The following three letters were written by Pier Maria Cecchini in 1607 and are addressed to Vincenzo I Gonzaga and his secretary Annibale Chioppo. By that time, the 'Accesi' were performing in Turin at the court of the Duke of Savoy, who wanted to keep them, while they were waiting to leave for Paris where their service had been requested by Queen Maria de' Medici and granted by their patron, Vincenzo Gonzaga. Apart from the usual expressions of rivalry and resentment between the actors, Cecchini's letters express the company's difficulties created by the contrasting wills of the Duke of Savoy who wanted to continue enjoying their services, and of Maria de' Medici who had agreed with Vincenzo that they should go to perform in Paris.*

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Annibale Chioppo. The letter dates from 22 November, 1607.*

My most illustrious Lordship and most honourable patron,  
 Here I am, importunate as usual and too confident in your kindness, but since I know how much you prize the service to His Most Serene Highness, I wish hereby to inform Your most illustrious Lordship about what is happening as regards the part of that service which falls on me. Since when I was in Mantua I imagined – and told His Highness about it – that we would be detained by these Most Serene Highnesses [the Dukes of Savoy]; I entreated him to give me letters in order to prevent that our departure should be barred, but I had none. Now I am in Turin, and am bound to perform some comedies; Cola [Aniello Di Mauro, who should have played in place of Martinelli] has not yet arrived, I left Mantua three weeks ago and the stuff which we sent for to Florence has not arrived yet, and we are informed that delivery will tarry a few more days. Once Cola arrives, they want us to go on performing and I, in order to serve as is meet, asked Cavalier Sandri, manager of... to show his Most Serene Highness the Duke both the letter addressed to the Queen [of France] and the passport issued by His Highness Our Lord. But I see that this is to no avail and therefore we most eagerly need letters asking that we may be allowed to leave, and if my repeated requests allow our departure, they will be proof that I was telling the truth. If in the end they allow us to leave,

His Highness should consider the time and the damage, because to wait for the money we deserve as recompense for our toils would mean to wait until the end of the year, and if I ever deserved a salary from His Highness, I deserve it this year better than in the past, for the time wasted, the money spent in addition to His, the dangers run and for a thousand more reasons which I omit. I entreat you to give your answer to Cavalier Sandri who, if he comes back after I am gone, will forward it to me in France; and with this I bow before your most illustrious Lordship and also acquaint you that this company (although without Arlecchino and Cola) has given so great and universal pleasure here as I hope it is going to give to their Majesties. From Turin November 22, 1607.

Your most devoted and obliged servant

Pier Maria Cecchini alias Frittellino

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 30 November, 1607.*

My most Serene Lordship,

By a letter to Mr Chieppio I informed Your Highness of what had passed, and again I inform you that today part of the stuff which had been sent to Florence was delivered except for a chest in which is the stuff of Cintio [Jacopo Antonio Fidenzi]. The amount of money I have spent up till now is so great that in order to leave Turin I must leave behind a very considerable pawn, and this was so great a disaster that I will not be able to recoup expenses, but to serve Your Highness I would not even care to lose my life. I am resolved to leave without waiting to be rewarded for the comedies performed to these Highnesses because this would mean to wait too long, but I sincerely swear to Your Highness that these most serene princes have been so pleased with this company, and in particular the Duke, that they are making us a thousand offers in order to have us here until the end of Carnival; but since this would be contrary to the service to His Majesty and to Your Highness' order, I took leave, and on December 4 I will leave for Paris with the company. And thus I humbly bow to Your Highness and will pray Our Lord together with all my own for the health of Your Highness and of Your most serene Household.

From Turin, November 30, 1607

Your most serene Highness' very humble and faithful servant

Pier Maria Cecchini

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 10 December, 1610.*

My most Serene Lordship,

Today, December 10, we are still in Turin, having contracted a debt of 350 *scudi* (and they are gold *scudi*) with mule drivers and carriers who have carried

our stuff (and with my mother, one of our women) up to Lyon. I also inform Your Highness that, having decided to leave without waiting for the reward for the time we have served, and being already in our boots, we have been enjoined not to leave, and we cannot say 'We are going to leave such and such a day'; and so we are without our stuff, without money and with many debts, having lost so much time that we cannot retrieve any longer. But now then, I will be patient and I temper all considering how much this company is enjoyed; and so I end by bowing in all humility to Your Highness

From Turin, December 10, 1607

Your Highness' most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

*The last group of letters belongs to a later date. They were written between August and September, 1620, to Ferdinando Gonzaga, who succeeded his father Vincenzo, by Pier Maria Cecchini, Giovan Battista Andreini and Tristano Martinelli. What appears from these missives is a rivalry which, by that time, had become sheer disorder owing to the intrigue, denounced by Cecchini but denied by Andreini, between Lelio and Baldina. The quarrel and the general confusion were further fuelled by the celebrated 'zanni' Tristano Martinelli, who obtained from his fellows that they signed a sort of accusation in form of a letter against his eternal rival Cecchini.*

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 15 July, 1620.*

My most Serene Lord and my only special master,  
I refrained as long as I could from troubling Your most serene Highness, but since I can no longer hold, I am obliged to disclose to you my tribulations, which keep growing every day.

I will not mention among these the fact that, in Lelio's plots, Baldina [Virginia Rotari], is no longer playing the maidservant, but the second woman, thereby depriving or lessening the roles which belong to my wife.

I will not talk about the fact that the same Lelio craftily entrusts the lovers' parts to the Captain, to prevent my wife from talking to the other lover.

I will not pay attention to the fact that in many of his plots he entrusts the parts of the first *zanni* to Arlecchino.

I will not complain about the fact that he has engaged and keeps in the Company a Pantalone who is universally disliked and gives him a whole part.

I have never complained about the fact that every day he entrusts a role to Berneta [Urbania Liberati], who stays at home nearly all the time... But I cannot keep silent about the fact that, in spite of the mutual affection which binds Flaminia and Florinda, who seem to have forgotten that they are women, in addition to this, Lelio is universally spreading the rumour that, if our courier

comes back from France with a negative answer, in that case he does not want my company any longer; which thing I envisaged from the beginning, when he made me remain without my companions, so that he might stay with his company.

And, since there is nothing he can complain about, as he gets from us all the satisfactions he wishes to have, he says that he does not want his wife to be involved in this competition; but things are different and I know how they are, and I am about to write it to Your Highness, but I do not know why I am doing it, there being persons who should do it better than me, and with better opportunities. But come, now, I cannot refrain myself. Lelio is in love with Baldina, and acts so immoderately that he makes his wife's life hell; and that little devil Baldina gets pleasure and laughs about it, which shows she is a most despicable ignorant person, and there will never be peace while she is in the company... What most disturbs me is that Lelio, by saying that he wants to work on his own, means he knows what he can do, as if Your Most Serene Highness had agreed with his intention. If things are thus, please be not displeased if I provide myself, because I will gather a company which will always serve Your Highness whenever you please, and do not let me remain frustrated without a company; or else (if it pleases Your Highness), do dismiss Baldina from the company, who would give her life to play the first part in a company which is in Venice, which company may in the future serve Your Highness, and so you will rid Florinda of this displeasure and also Lelio of this opportunity, and will restore peace in the company, not only when we go to France, but also when we stay in Italy. I disclosed my feeling, leaving Your Highness' prudence to act, to which I recommend my peace of mind and reputation, entreating you to give me an answer, and let me not remain surrounded by so many doubts; and, together with my wife I most reverently bow to you.

From Milan, 15 July, 1620  
Your most serene Highness'

Most humble and obedient servant  
Pier Maria Cecchini

*Giovan Battista Andreini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 5 August, 1620.*

Most Serene Highness,

I could never believe (most Serene Highness) that my letters would become so daring as to be directly addressed to your most serene hand; but may this grace be allowed them today.

Your Highness certainly knows that, owing to a letter written to me by signor Ercole Marliani, I was so nauseated that I wanted to give it all up and come to your most serene feet to find there the mercy you bestow on your enemies, not on your most devoted servants who never, as I believe, displeased you.

The letter said that I, in love with Baldina, was causing revoultion and that therefore I would be punished.

Most serene patron, a great punishment it would be if I had fallen in love with this person – if it were true – because if I knew, if every city knew, that beautiful Iole has fallen in love with Nesso the Centaur, would never persuade me to such falling in love.

Indeed, although falling in love happens sometime by the imperious force of the stars, nevertheless little or nothing good can issue unless this is accompanied by the evaluation of the object of love.

I not only zealously prize my honour, but also the honour of my companions, and this the Captain and Baldo know quite well, since twice I run to their rescue, once in Genova, the other in Paris.

This is indeed the tongue of the Captain who, jealous lest he lose the object of his love, spread this rumour, which was confirmed with her magic pen by the astrologer Bernetta [Urania Liberati]; and so, for two or three days (as little women are wont to do) the floods of tears and abuse were open.

Therefore, with this heavy cross which I carry with my wife, patiently sagging under that weight, I fell silent.

....

And I end here, wishing you the highest good I humbly bow to you.

From Milan, the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1620

Your most serene Highness'

Most humble and obedient servant

Giovan Battisti Andreini

*Pier Maria Cecchini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 26 August, 1620.*

Most Serene Highness,

In the midst of so much confusion, I would not know what else to say to your Most Serene Highness but ask you to order the gentleman your confidant to question our doorman and then inform Your Highness about what is happening between Lelio and his wife on account of the reasons which by now everyone is acquainted with. My Lord, I profess I ever want to serve Your Highness until you are content with my service, but I entreat you not to force me to remain in the midst of such a mess. Here are only heard cryings, insults, charms, swearings not to do, not to say, so that, living in this way it is impossible to live well either in France or in Italy, indeed, neither in this world nor in the other. I wish to live very soberly in Mantua under the shade of Your Highness rather than get rich touring the world in these people's company; when I say these people I mean Lelio, because they all agree with his wife. For God's sake, consider me at least worthy of an answer, so that I may be given a place where to find solace. And with this I pray for your everlasting health and bow very deeply to you. From Milan, 26 August, 1620.

Your Most Serene Highness'

Most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

*Tristano Martinelli to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 28 September, 1620*

Most Serene godfather,

Today signor Lelio told us that we are ordered to get ready to go to France, where we are all agreed to go, starting from signor Frittellino who says that if Lidia is coming he does not want to come, and the company likes Lidia more than him; but they did not want to wrong him. Furthermore, Frittellino says that, if he came, he wanted the company to pay for his journey to Paris... a thing that none of the *comici* has ever done; and because I said 'Although this is not permitted, to please the said Frittellino, let us pay for his journey', and only because I said this word, he started ranting, cursing to God, swearing that he does not want to come, threatening me and saying that if he came unwillingly to France, if Your Highness made him come, he will only sow discord in the company, and many other impertinent ugly words, but pronounced in great anger, and, to make it short, that he does not want to come. At this, the company decided to go without him, and fetch a good Pantalone, and myself and Fichetto [Lorenzo Nettuni] as Zanni, who in Milan was a zanni better liked than Frittellino, which is acknowledged by all. Therefore, most serene Highness, the whole company entreats you to let us go with our company, which is going to be a thousand times more satisfactory than it would be with this bad man; and it is not only I who says so, but all those who associate with him, and in particular the whole company, which asked me to inform Your most serene Highness, because they know that you will graciously trust my letter. And that it is true that this man is greatly confused Your most serene Highness will see from two letters received in Milan, which signor Lelio is going to show you, and that he does nothing but plot all the time. And, as witness that I am telling the truth, signor Lelio is going to sign this; while we pray Our Lord to give Your Highness all happiness. From Due Castelli the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 1620.

Your Most Serene Highness'  
most humble servant  
Tristano Martinelli

I, Lelio *comico*, confirm what said above, because I see that a most serious danger is impending.

I, Giovanni Rivani  
I, Girolamo Garavini

#### 4. *Craftsmen*

*The letters in this section were written by craftsmen and are of a different nature. The first one, written in 1539, is a petition addressed to the Lord Privy Seal Thomas Cromwell from Suffolk and Essex wool weavers who complain about the rising cost of wool production and the consequent decay of the trade. The following two are private letters written in 1567 by immigrant craftsmen in London to their families at Ypres.*

*The Suffolk and Essex wool weavers to the Lord Privy Seal Thomas Cromwell. The letter was written in 1531*

... my Lorde Prevy Seale.

... Complayning Shewith vnto your honorable Lordshipp your poore Suppliauntes... the weyvers of woollen Clothes inhabiting in and by all the hede to... mooste vsed to be made within the Shyres of Suffolk and Essex, as Ipsewiche, Hadleighe, Lavenham, Barholt, Colchester, and Dedham with other townes therabowte, that where as it has pleased the Kynges highness tendering the publyke welth of this his Realme of Englande, to make certayne Actes and statutttes, wheroff one is concerning the pure and true making off woollen clothes, in the which it is enactyd that the same clothes shall always holde beare and kepe the full Rate and Syce bothe of the Length and bredth, wherby your said supplyauntes in every clothe always susteynith the more coste, Labour, and busynes Dyvers wayes as your good Lordshipp full well can consider, Albe it your said Sypplyauntes the weyvers cannot attayne nor nothing be allowide for the same at their masters the Clothiers handes, By meane wheroff the ocupacion of weyving, which is the hede and mooste pure point of Clothing, is alrede gretly decayed, in so moche that no man in those parties will put their children to that ocupacion, so that within fewe yeres these shires of Suffolk and Essex of weyvers ys lyke to be frustrate and voyde. Moreover, moste gracyous Lorde, by Reason that the Richmen the clothiers have their Loomes and weyvers and also their fullers dailie workyng within their owne howses. All these your saide supplyauntes, beyng howseholders nowe luyng, having their wyffes and children, Are many tymes destitute of worke. And the lenger they lyue, the more they are lyke to growe into extreme povertie; for the Richmen the Clothiers be concludede and Agreede Amonge themselues to holde and pay one pryce for weyving of the saide Clothes, which pryce is so litle, that your sayde supplyauntes the weyvers cannot with their Labour gett wherwith to susteyne and maynteyne their poore howsholdes, although they sholde worke incessantly nyght and day, holy day and worke day, yet your saide subiectes for avoiding off Idlenes Are of necessityte compellyd to take their worke at the Clothiers own pryce. By meanes wheroff many of your saide Supplyauntes, that hathe kepte good howeholdes, hathe exspendyd and wasted their substaunce, And are glade to become other mens servauntes, And many mo of them ys lyke so to doo oneles a Reformation the soner be had in this behalff, off all which premysses your saide Supplyauntes hathe made and presentyd a bill in to the parliament howse, But as yet they have little comfote theroff. Pleasith it therefore your honorable lordship, of your haboundaunte goodnes and charitye to be so good lorde vnto your said Supplyauntes as to extend your good worde and gracyous helpe towards the fortherance of the forsaide bill presentyd into the parliament howse, so that yt may take effecte. And your saide supplyauntes shall Duryng their lyves pray to god for the preservacion of your honorable estate long to contynewe.

*Clais van Wervekin (hatmaker) to his wife at Ypres. The letter was written on 21 August, 1567.*

... You would never believe how friendly the people are together, and the English are the same and quite loving to our nation. If you come here with half our property, you would never think of going to live in Flanders. Send my money and the three children. Come at once and do not be anxious. When you come, bring a dough trough for there are none here. Know that I await you and doubt me not; send me Catelynken, Saerle and Tonyne. Bring also our long hooks to hang your linnencords on. Buy two little wooden dishes to make up half pound of butter; for all Netherlanders and Flemings make their own butter, for here it is all pigs fat... Your married friend.

*Clement Baet to his wife at Ypres The letter was written on 5 September, 1567.*

... There is good trade in bays and I will look after a house as quickly as I can to get into business, for it will be easy to make money. I will get ready the gear for making bays against your coming. Bring all your and your daughter's clothing, for people go well clad here. Let your sister know that Lein's trade is no use, for they only work at bay work here. Greet heartily Philip Kuen, Pieter de Pers, Pieter Priem, Cornelis Hendrickz, Christianen van der Stene, Jakijns de Muelene, Hooris Boontam, and Jan Spene. I let you know that we are merry and happy with each other. May God give you the same loving peace and riches as we have here at Norwich. It is very dear to hear the word of God peacefully.

##### 5. *Scientists*

*On 30 December, 1610, Galileo Galilei writes from Florence to the Italian mathematician Benedetto Castelli in Brescia. In 1609, Galileo had constructed his first telescope and is now informing his friend about what his instrument shows of the changing shapes and size of Venus and the peculiar structure of Mars.*

To the very Reverend Father and most honourable Father  
Benedetto Castelli, Casinensis Frier

To Your Lordship's most welcome letter of December 5 I will give a brief answer, for I am still aggrieved by a sickness which for many days has confined me to bed. I heard with great pleasure about your plan to come and stay in Florence, which rekindles my hope to enjoy your company and have a chance to serve you for some time: do keep this purpose and be assured that I will ever be ready to answer all your needs, although mine or anyone else's help cannot answer the needs of the sharpness of your intelligence. As regards your queries, I can in part satisfy you; which I most willingly do.

Know therefore that about three months ago I started observing Venus with my instrument and saw it round in shape and very small; it grew day by day in size and, keeping the same roundness until at last, arriving at a great distance from the sun, it started to grow smaller from the eastern part and, in a few days, was reduced to a half circle. It remained in this shape for several days, but ever growing in size: now it is starting to become sickle-shaped and, until it is seen at sunset, it will wear thinner in its thin horns until it vanishes: but, when it is again seen at morning, its horns are going to be very thin and opposite to the sun, and it will grow until it reaches a half circle up to its utmost size. Then it will remain in this shape for a few days, although decreasing in size; then, from the half circle in a few days it will grow to a whole circle, and for many months it will be seen both at sunrise and at sunset, all round, but smallish in size. Your Reverence is well aware of the evident consequences which can be drawn from this.

As regards Mars, I would not dare to affirm anything certain; but, having observed it for four months, it seems to me that it appears about a third in size of what it was last September, that from the east it appears rather decreased, if I am not deceived by my wish, which I do not believe is the case. It will be seen better at the beginning of next February... and yet, since it appears so small, its shape is not easily perceived, if it is perfectly round or is somehow flawed. But Venus I see as clear and distinguished as I see the moon, for the telescope shows it is the same diameter as the moon perceived with the naked eye.

Oh how many and what crucial consequences have I derived, my dear Don Benedetto, from these and other observations of mine! 'Sed quid inde?' Your Reverence almost made me laugh when you said that by these evident observations the stubborn can be convinced. You do not know, then, that in order to convince those who are endowed with rationality and desirous to know the truth the other demonstrations, advanced in the past, were sufficient; but to convince the obstinate, who only look for vain applause from the stupid and stolid populace, not even the witness of the very stars who, descended to the earth spoke of them, would be sufficient? Let us try to acquire some knowledge for ourselves and be content with this sole gratification; but let us renounce the wish and hope for an advancement of public opinion or the assent of philosophers 'in libris'.

What is Your Reverence going to say about Saturn, which is not only one star, but three stars linked together and fixed to one another, set in parallel to the equinoctial line, thus: o O o? The one in the middle is larger than those at the sides by three or four times; I observed it in this shape since last July, but now they have much decreased in bulk.

Now then, come to Florence, we will enjoy ourselves and will have a thousand new and admirable things to talk about. In the meantime, I remain your servant, kiss your hands and pray God for your happiness. Please present my double regards to Father Serafino and to Messers Lana and Albano.

From Florence, September 30, 1610  
 From Your very affectionate Servant  
 Galileo Galilei

*Between July 25 and August 10, 1660, Pierre de Fermat and Blaise Pascal, the two scientists who are acknowledged as the founders of modern mathematics, write to each other. The exchange has a personal tone, except for what concerns a surprising statement about geometry made by Pascal.*

*Pierre de Fermat to Blaise Pascal. The letter was written on 25 July, 1660*

Sunday, July 25, 1660

Monsieur,

as soon as I discovered that we were nearer to one another than we had ever been before, I could not resist making plans for renewing our friendship and I asked Monsieur de Carcavito to be mediator: in a word I would like to embrace you and to talk to you for a few days; but as my health is not any better than yours, I very much hope that you will do me the favour of coming half way to meet me and that you will oblige me by suggesting a place between Clermont and Toulouse, where I would go without fail towards the end of September or the beginning of October.

If you do not agree to this arrangement, you will run the risk of seeing me at your house and of thus having two ill people there at once. I await your news with impatience and am, with all my heart,

Yours ever,  
 Fermat

*Blaise Pascal to Pierre de Fermat. The letter was written on 10 August, 1660.*

Tuesday, August 10, 1660

Monsieur,

You are the most gallant man in the world and assuredly I am the one who can best recognize your qualities and very much admire them, especially when they are combined with your own singular abilities. Because of this I feel I must show my appreciation of the offer you have made me, whatever difficulty I still have in reading and writing, but the honour you do me is so dear to me that I cannot hasten too much in answering your letter.

I will tell you then, Monsieur, that if I were in good health, I would have flown to Toulouse and I would not allow a man such as you to take one step for a man such as myself. I will tell you also that, even if you were the best Geometrician in the whole of Europe, it would not be that quality

which would attract me to you, but it is your great liveliness and integrity in conversation that would bring me to see you.

For, to talk frankly with you about Geometry, it is to me the very best intellectual exercise: but at the same time I recognize it to be useless and that I can find little difference between a man who is nothing else but a geometrician and a clever craftsman. Although I call it the best craft in the world, it is after all only a craft, and I have often said it is fine to try one's hand at it but not to devote all one's powers to it.

In other words, I would not take two steps for Geometry and I feel certain you are very much of the same mind. But as well as all these my studies have taken me so far from this way of thinking, that I can scarcely remember that there is such a thing as geometry. I began it, a year or two ago, for a particular reason; having satisfied this, it is quite possible that I shall never think about it again.

Besides, my health is not yet very good, for I am so weak that I cannot walk without a stick nor ride a horse, I can only manage three or four leagues in a carriage. It was in this way that I took twenty-two days in coming here from Paris. The doctors recommended me to take the waters at Bourbon during the month of September, and two months ago I promised, if I can manage it, to go from there through Poitou by river to Saumur to stay until Christmas with M. le duc de Roannes, governour of Poitou, who has feelings for me that I do not deserve. But, since I go through Orléans on my way to Saumur by river and if my health prevents me from going further, I shall go from there to Paris.

There, Monsieur, is the present state of my life, which I felt obliged to describe to you so as to convince you of the impossibility of my being able to acknowledge it to you or to your children, for those who bear the name of the foremost man in the world.

I am, etc.

Pascal

De Bienassis, 10th August, 1660

*On September 8, 1679, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz writes to Christiaan Huygens about a new, nonquantitative approach to geometry and describes the properties of phosphorus.*

One of my friends, Mr Hansen, who has had the honour of speaking with you, assures me that you continue to have a good opinion of me, which I am much indebted to you. And I want to use this opportunity to witness how much I honour your extraordinary worth, which everyone recognizes as I do, and which places you in the highest rank.

I have learned from Mr Mariotte that you will soon give us the dioptrics which we have so long desired. I am very eager to see it some day, and I should like to know in advance if you are satisfied with the reasons for refraction which Descartes proposes. I must admit that I am not entirely, any more than Mr. Fermat's explanation in the third volume of Descartes' letters.

I have left my manuscript on arithmetical quadratures at Paris so that it may some day be printed there. But I have advanced far beyond studies of this kind and believe that we can get to the bottom of most problems which now seem to lie beyond our calculation; for example, quadratures, the inverse method of tangents, the irrational roots of equations, and the arithmetic of Diphphantus. I have some general methods which solve most of these things in a way as determinate as that used in ordinary algebra to solve equation. And I am not afraid to say that there is a way to advance algebra as far beyond what Vieta and Descartes have left us as Vieta and Descartes carried it beyond the ancients... But, in spite of the progress which I have made in these matters, I am still not satisfied with algebra, because it does not give the shortest methods or the most beautiful constructions in geometry. This is why I believe that, so far as geometry is concerned, we need still another analysis which is distinctly geometrical or linear and which will express *situation* directly as algebra expresses *magnitude* directly. And I believe that I have found the way and that we can represent figures and even machines and movements by characters, as algebra represents numbers or magnitudes. I am sending you an essay which seems to me to be important. There is no one who can judge it better than you, Sir, and I should take your opinion in preference to those of many other men.

I am also sending you a little of the corporeal fire, which can well be called a perpetual light for, when properly protected, it lasts many years without being consumed. It is a small piece but beautiful, for similar pieces are not always produced; usually the matter comes in small grains. I have put it in a bladder, and this is sealed in wax, so that nothing can escape, and the piece will not take fire by motion or friction, as easily happens. Such a piece will be enough for many experiments, for the smallest particle is capable of making things radiant, and, when one takes it into his hands, they remain luminous for some hours, yet there is nothing visible in daylight. One can write with it in luminous letters and, some hours later, when these seem dead, they become visible afresh if rubbed once more. I hold that there is a true fire inclosed with the matter, but not concentrated enough to make itself felt. When one blows against it, the light disappears but returns immediately afterword, which is a remarkable thing. However, I have seen its vapour alone light a piece of paper which I was using to wipe my fingers when I emptied the container after I had produced the fire.

...

I beg you, Sir, to tell me something about scientific happenings there... You have heard mention the attempt of Mr. Becher, in Holland, to extract gold from sand. There are persons here who think well of him... I should like to know if you have heard talk of it in Paris. As for me, I am sceptical of his success, for I believe I know a little about the nature of the experiment. He does find a vestige of gold, but I do not think he has gained any of it, for he claims that the proportion of gold is greater in large than in small amounts, which is paradoxical.

*On February 8, 1758, Carl Linnaeus writes from Uppsala to John Ellis in London seeking information about the supposed presence of a strange being in London and asking Ellis to examine it and describe it in detail.*

Uppsala, Feb. 8, 1758

Sir,

I learn by letters from London that a Troglodyte, or *Homo nocturnus*, figured in Bontius, p. 84, and certainly very different from the *Satyrus* of Tulpius, is arrived in your capital. In order to learn the truth of this, as no subject is more interesting to me, I have not been able to think of any way so promising as to request your assistance. I therefore most respectfully beg of you to examine this animal with attention and to compare it with the account of the above-mentioned author. The points on which I chiefly want information are the following: 1. Is the body white, walking erect, and about half the human size? 2. Is the hair of the head white, though curled and rigid, like a moor? 3. Are the eyes orbicular, with a golden iris and pupil? 4. Do the eyelids lie over each other (*incumbentes*) with a *membrana nictans*? 5. Is the sight lateral, and is it only nocturnal? 6. Is there any whistling voice? 7. Is there any space between the canine teeth and the others, either before or behind? 8. What is peculiar in the organs of generation, whether male or female? I wish the excellent Mr. Edwards would make a drawing of this individual, as there is no more remarkable animal, except man, in the world. I earnestly entreat you to observe its manners with all possible attention.

...

This letter is enclosed to my excellent friend Collinson, as I am ignorant of your proper address. Be so good as to inform me of your precise place of abode.

...

*On 25 April, 1758, John Ellis replies to Carl Linnaeus saying that he knows nothing about the presence in London of a 'Troglodyte' or 'Nightman' similar to the one which Linnaeus is describing.*

Sir,

Our friend Mr. Collinson delivered me your obliging letter very lately, wherein you desire me to enquire whether there is such a creature here as a Troglodyte or Nightman, such as is figured by Bontius, which you think very different from the Satyr of Tulpius. I have enquired very narrowly after this animal, and cannot find that there is any such here. We had one of this kind of animals here about 20 years ago, which was called a Chimpanzee; this at that time I saw alive, but as it was habited like a young girl, for it was a female, I did not examine it so particularly as to answer your questions. All I can remember is that, from its

whole behaviour and actions, it appeared to resemble the human species more than any that I had ever seen exhibited here. I think it had but very little hair on it, and appeared nearer to Tulpius' than Brontius' figure, which last I think is but ill designed, and that of Tulpius placed in an awkward posture. For I examined in our friend Edward's possession Dr. Tyson's anatomy of the Ouran-Outang, and find the Doctor had drawn both Tulpius' and Bontius' animal in the same plate with his own animal. This Ouran-Outang is very hairy, the hair thinly set, and of a reddish brown colour. The same kind of animal is still preserved in the College of Physicians, which Mr. Edwards has drawn, and is among his last plates.

I have got a plate of the Chimpanzee, which was published in the year 1738, and which I shall send you by the first ship that goes to Stockholm. The colour of this animal was a pallid dusky kind, like the Mulattoes.

...

## 6. Women

*Isabella Gonzaga d'Este, a patron of the arts and wife to Francesco II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, writes to a certain Luciana N. stigmatizing the behaviour of Luciana's mother. The letter, which is not dated, is in Ortensio Landi, Lettere di molte valorose donne (Letters of Many Worthy Women), 1549. Isabella lived between 1474 and 1539.*

I heard that you are very cross with me and that you wish me dead because I said that your mother was behaving like a mad woman, since a few days ago she lustily danced both publicly and privately for a whole day; indeed I truly said so, and I confirm it, and again blame her, oh what a fine honesty is this in a decorous Matron who is held to be wise; does she not know how dangerous it is to draw straw near a burning fire; who does not know that many women who arrived chaste and bashful at balls went back shameless and full of lust. And what advantage can you expect from that touching of hands, from that lascivious waggle and from the very uncovering of any parts of the body which were hidden? No one (as the man who wrote against Verres said) ever went to dance and remained sober. Indeed, I do not understand what the reason for so strong a fury against me on your part may be, since I was prompted only by that care for womanly honour which I always harboured; and should we strive to lose it? what are we worthy then?

...

Now, I will only say what I already said; I know you have wisdom (if you want to use it) and that by yourself, when the great fury which now blinds you is appeased, you will say that I am utterly right and that you were greatly wrong to get furious with me.

From Luzzara, the 7<sup>th</sup> of February

*Pantasilea Lonardi Giordani warns M. Faustina Benzona about the lascivious behaviour of Faustina's son. The letter, which is not dated, is in Ortensio Landi, Lettere di molte valorose donne (Letters of Many Worthy Women), 1549.*

According to my advice, it would be well done if your son remained at home, leaving alone the wives of other men (who are indeed his friends), otherwise I fear for him that he may enter into competition with Phaon, Speusippus, the prefect Tigellinus, Rodoald the Lombard king and Pope John XII who, discovered to be adulterers, met violent deaths; exhort him to follow my advice, restrain him by virtue of maternal obedience lest one day he make you sorrowful and tearful. Be healthy and cheerful.

From Pesaro, the 7<sup>th</sup> of August.

*The poet Vittoria Colonna writes to Marchese Ferrante Francesco D'Avalos, her husband. The letter, which is not dated, was written after the defeat of Ravenna (1512), where the Marchese had been made prisoner.*

Eccelso mio Signor,

I write this to thee to tell thee amidst what dubious wishes and bitter anxieties I live. I little expected such grief and torment from thee, who oughtest to have gained the victory if the favour of Heaven had been propitious. I did not think that the Marchese and Fabrizio<sup>11</sup> would ever have caused me such great sorrow – the one my husband, the other my father! Piety towards my father and love towards thee are for ever gnawing at my heart like two hungry rabid snakes. I believed that the Fates would have been more benignant. I believed that so my prayers and tears, and love without measure, would not have been displeasing to God; whilst thy deeds are known in heaven and the fame and glory of my father also.

But now this dangerous assault and this horrid and cruel fight has turned my mind and heart to stone. Your great valour has shone as in a Hector or an Achilles; but what comfort is that to me, weeping, abandoned?

My mind was always doubtful, which caused me to give a mixed judgement, divided between assent and dissent; but I, O miserable! Always thought that evil fortune could not come nigh thy valour and thy brave soul!

Others may desire war! I always desire peace! Saying it is enough for me if my Marchese remains quietly in his place. It does not disturb you to attempt difficult undertakings, but to us, grieving and afflicted, what seeds of fear and doubt it brings!

You, full of ardour, not dreaming of anything but honour, disdainful of danger, rush to battle with furious cries; whilst we, timid of heart, sad of aspect, desire – the sister, the brother; the wife, the husband; the mother, the son; and I, alas, desire both husband, father, brothers and son! In this case I am daughter by nature, wife by the legal ties of marriage, and sister and mother by affection!

Never before came messenger from whom I did not seek to know every little particular, to make my mind joyful and at ease; but on that fatal day I (in the *body*, my *mind* is always with *thee*), was lying at a point of our island, when the whole atmosphere appeared like a sick cloud – like a cavern of black fog; the sea looked like ink and, weeping around, the marine gods seemed to say to Ischia – ‘To-day, Vittoria, thou shalt hear of disgrace from the confines. Though now in health and honour, thou shalt be turned to grief; but thy father and husband are saved, though taken prisoners.’

Then with a dark and sad countenance I, weeping, narrated the fearful and sad augury to the magnanimous Costanza.<sup>12</sup> She comforted me, as is her wont, saying, ‘Do not think of it. It would be a strange thing for such a force to be conquered!’ ‘He cannot be much removed from such evils’, I replied, ‘who, animated to great deeds, does not fear to what his hand leads. Those who go into action must show a prompt and rapid boldness, and can have no breathing time, nor bargain with fortune.’

And behold! As I spoke the fatal messenger arrived to tell us the sad tale of thy ill fortune; the remembrance of which still seems to me like a trick played upon my feelings. If victory thou desired I was near thee; but thou, in leaving me, lost *her*, and in seeking another she has fled from thee!

It distressed Pompey, as thou oughtest to know, to leave Cornelia; and it distressed Cato to leave Marcia in bitter tears. A wife ought to follow her husband at home and abroad; if he suffers trouble, she suffers; if he is happy, she is; if he dies, she dies. What happens to one happens to both; equals in life, they are equals in death. His fate is her fate.

Thou livest cheerful, having no care; and in thinking of thy newly-acquired fame, thou grieveest not to be separated from thy beloved! Whilst I, with angry and sad countenance, rest on thy abandoned and solitary couch, with hope and sorrow filled; thy joy tempering my grief.

*Anne Boleyn writes to Cardinal Wolsey. Anne is anxiously waiting for news from the Pope and his Legate Campeggio. Anne's letter is completed by Henry's postscript to the same effect. The probable date is September, 1528.*

My Lord, in my most humblest wise that my Heart can think, I desire you to pardon me that I am so bold to trouble you with my simple and rude Writing, esteeming it to proceed from her, that is much desirous to know that your Grace does well, as I perceive by this Bearer that you do. The which I pray God long to continue, as I am most bound to pray; for I do know the great Pains and Troubles that you have taken for me both Day and Night, is never like to be recompenced on my Part, but alonely in loving you next unto the King's Grace, above all Creatures living. And I do not doubt but the daily Proofs of my Deeds shall manifestly declare and affirm my Writing to be true, and I

do trust you do think the same. My Lord, I do assure you I do long to hear from you News of the Legate; for I do hope an they come from you they shall be very good, and I am sure you desire it as much as I, and more, an it were possible, as I know it is not: And thus remaining in a stedfast Hope, I make an End of my Letter written with the Hand of her that is most bound to be,

Your Humble Servant,

Anne Boleyn.

*Postscript by Henry VIII*

The Writer of this Letter would not cease till she had caused me likewise to set to my Hand; desiring you, though it be short, to take it in good Part. I ensure you there is neither of us, but that greatly desireth to see you, and much more joyous to hear that you have scaped this Plague so well, trusting the Fury thereof to be passed, specially with them that keepeth good Diet, as I trust you do. The not hearing of the Legate's Arrival in *France*, causeth us somewhat to muse; notwithstanding we trust by your Diligence and Vigilancy (with the Assistance of Almighty God) shortly to be eased out of that Trouble. No more to you at this Time; but that I pray God send you as good Health and Prosperity as the Writer would.

By Your Loving Sovereigne and Friend  
Henry K.

*Teresa de Avila writes to the Reverend Father Pedro Ibañez. The letter accompanies the text of Teresa's Life which the saint had been requested to write by Father Pedro, her spiritual director. The date is about 1562.*

JESUS. The Holy Ghost be always with your Reverence. Amen.  
It would not be amiss, in writing to your Reverence, to dwell on this service of mine, in order to oblige you the more to take particular care in recommending me to God. And this I could well do, seeing it has cost me so dear to behold myself in writing, and thus to have brought to my remembrance so many of my miseries, though I can with truth say, that I have experienced more reluctance in mentioning the favours which our Lord has shown me, than I should have felt in mentioning the offences I have committed against His Majesty.

I have done what your Reverence commanded me, to enter into more particulars; but upon this condition, that your Reverence also will perform what you

promised me, viz., to tear out whatever you do not approve. When your Reverence sent for the manuscript, I had not finished the perusal of it after having written it. Hence you may find some things not very clearly explained, and others mentioned twice over; for the time I had was so short, that I could not review what I had written. I beseech your Reverence to correct it; and order it to be transcribed, if it must be sent to Father Avila, otherwise some one may know my hand.

I am very desirous such orders may be given, as he thinks proper, since it is with this intention I began to write. If he shall judge I am going on in a safe way, this will give me great consolation, for there will be no more to do on my part. Your Reverence must do whatever you think best; consider how bound you are to one who thus confides her soul to you. *Your* soul I will recommend to our Lord all the days of my life; make haste, then, to serve His Majesty, in order to be able to do me this favour, for your Reverence will see, by what is now sent you, how well you are employed in giving yourself wholly to Him (as your Reverence has already begun so to do) who gives Himself to us without reserve. May He be blessed for ever: I hope in His mercy, that both your Reverence and myself may one day meet together in that kingdom, where we shall more clearly understand the great favours He has been pleased to show us both, and praise Him for ever and ever. Amen.

Your Reverence's unworthy Servant,  
Teresa de Jesús.

*Mary Stewart Queen of Scots writes to her banished servants while under house arrest in England.*

From Sheffield, the 18th September, 1571.

My faithful and good servants, seeing that it has pleased God to visit me with so much affliction, and now with this strict imprisonment, and the banishment of you, my servants, from me; I return thanks to the same God, who has given me strength and patience to endure it, and pray that this good God may give you like grace, and that you may console yourselves, since your banishment is on account of the good service which you have rendered to me, your queen and mistress; for that at least will be of very great honour to you to have given so good a proof of your fidelity in such an exigence, and if it shall be the pleasure of the good God to restore me to liberty, I shall never forget you all, but shall reward you according to my power. At present I have written to my ambassador for your maintenance, not having it in my power to do better towards you, as I should wish; and now at your departure I charge each one of you, in the name of God, and for my blessing, that you be good servants to God, and do not murmur against him for any affliction which may befall you, for thus it is his custom to visit his chosen. I commend to you the faith in which you have been baptized and instructed along with me, remembering that out of the ark of Noah there is no salvation: and like

as you make profession of no other sovereign than myself alone, so I pray you to profess with me one God, one faith, one Catholic Church, as the greater portion of you have already done. And especially you who are recently reclaimed from your errors, strive to instruct yourselves very rigidly, and found yourselves in the faith: and pray to God to give you constancy, for to such God will never deny his grace; and to you, Master John Gordon and William Douglas, I pray God that he may inspire your hearts. I can no more.

Secondly, I command you to live in friendship and holy charity with each other, and to bear with each other's failings: and now being separated from me, assist yourselves mutually with the means and graces which God has given to you: and above all pray to God for me, and give my very affectionate remembrances to the French ambassador in London, and tell him the state in which I am. And in France present my humble duties to all my uncles and friends, and particularly to my grandmother, whom let some one of you hasten to visit for me. Beseech my uncles to urge strongly the King, the Queen, and Monsieur, to assist my poor subjects in Scotland; and if I die here, to grant the same protection to my son and my friends as to myself, according to the ancient league of France with Scotland. Remember me to Lord Fleming, the Archbishop of Glasgow, and George Douglas, and all my good subjects; and bid them be of good cheer, and not to be concerned for my adversity, but each of them do the best that he can, and tell them to demand from all the sovereigns assistance for our party, and not to mind me, for I am content to endure every kind of affliction and suffering, even death itself, for the liberty of my country. If I die, I only regret that I shall not have the means of rewarding the services and the trouble which they have endured in my quarrel; but I hope that if it shall be so, that God will not leave them unrequited, and will cause my son and the other Catholic princes my friends and allies to take them under their protection. If Lord Seton can hear from me, send him the copy of this letter.

Lastly, if I have not been so good a mistress to you as your necessities required, God is my witness that my good will has never been wanting, but the means; and if I have sharply reprehended you, God is my witness that I have intended it for your good, and never to cast you off or from want of affection. I beseech you, comfort yourselves in God; and you, William Douglas, rest assured that the life which you have risked for mine, shall never be destitute so long as I have a friend alive. Do not part company till you reach the French court, and there all of you together wait upon my ambassador, and tell him all that you have seen or heard of me or mine. Therefore I pray to God with an anguished and afflicted heart, that according to his infinite mercy he may be the protector of my country and my faithful subjects; and that he may forgive those who have done me so much injury and are so hostile to me, and turn their hearts to a speedy repentance, and that he may give you all grace, and me also, to conform us to his will.

Written in prison in Sheffield Castle, the 18th of September, 1571. If you can keep this letter, take it to the Archbishop of Glasgow, as evidence that your

service has been approved by me.  
Your good and gracious mistress,  
Marie E.

*Sister Maria Celeste (Virginia), daughter of Galileo Galilei, writes to her father, after he was found gravely suspect of heresy and, on 22 June, 1633, was sentenced by the Holy Office to remain indefinitely under house arrest. The letter was written on 2 July, 1633.*

Most Illustrious and Beloved Lord Father,  
Just as suddenly and unexpectedly as word of your new torment reached me, Sire, so intensely did it pierce my soul with pain to hear the judgment that has finally been passed, denouncing your person as harshly as your book. I learned all this by importuning Signor Geri, because, not having any letters from you this week, I could not calm myself, as though I already knew all that had happened.

My dearest lord father, now is the time to avail yourself more than ever of that prudence which the Lord God has granted you, bearing these blows with that strength of spirit which your religion, your profession, and your age require. And since you, by virtue of your vast experience, can lay claim to full cognizance of the fallacy and instability of everything in this miserable world, you must not make too much of these storms, but rather take hope that they will soon subside and transform themselves from troubles into as many satisfactions.

In saying all that I am speaking what my own desires dictate, and also what seems a promise of leniency demonstrated toward you, Sire, by His Holiness, who has destined for your prison a place so delightful, whereby it appears we may anticipate another commutation of your sentence conforming even more closely with all your and our wishes; may it please God to see things turn out that way, if it be for the best. Meanwhile I pray you not to leave me without the consolation of your letters, giving me reports of your condition, physically and especially spiritually: though I conclude my writing here, I never cease to accompany you with my thoughts and prayers, calling on His Divine Majesty to grant you true peace and consolation.

From San Matteo, the 2nd day of July 1633.

Most affectionate daughter,  
S. M. Celeste

### 7. *Dedicatory Letters*

Niccolò Machiavelli, Dedicatory Letter of *Il principe* (*The Prince*), 1532

To the Magnificent Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici

Those who desire to win the favour of princes generally endeavour to do so by of-

fering them those things which they themselves prize most, or such as they observe the prince to delight in most. Thence it is that princes have very often presented to them horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness. Wishing now myself to offer to your Magnificence some proof of my devotion, I have found nothing amongst all I possess that I hold more dear or esteem more highly than the knowledge of the actions of great men, which I have acquired by long experience of modern affairs and a continued study of ancient history.

These I have meditated upon for a long time, and examined with great care and diligence; and having now written them out in a small volume, I send this to your Magnificence. And although I judge this work unworthy of you, yet I trust that your kindness of heart may induce you to accept it, considering that I cannot offer you anything better than the means of understanding in the briefest time all that which I have learnt by so many years of study, and with so much trouble and danger to myself.

I have not set off this little work with pompous phrases, nor filled it with high-sounding and magnificent words, nor with any other allurements or extrinsic embellishments with which many are wont to write and adorn their works; for I wished that mine should derive credit only from the truth of the matter, and that the importance of the subject should make it acceptable.

And I hope it may not be accounted presumption if a man of lowly and humble station ventures to discuss and direct the conduct of princes; for as those who wish to delineate countries place themselves low in the plain to observe the form and character of mountains and high places, and for the purpose of studying the nature of the low country place themselves high upon an eminence, so one must be a prince to know well the character of the people, and to understand well the nature of a prince one must be of the people.

May your Magnificence then accept this little gift in the same spirit in which I send it; and if you will read and consider it well, you will recognise in it my desire that you may attain that greatness which fortune and your great qualities promise. And if your Magnificence will turn your eyes from the summit of your greatness towards those low places, you will know how undeservedly I have to bear the great and continued malice of fortune.

François Rabelais, Dedicatory Letter of *La vie de Gargantua et Pantagruel* (*The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*), Book 1 (c. 1532), trans. Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty and Peter Antony Motteux, 1894.

The Author's prologue to the First Book

Most noble and illustrious drinkers, and you thrice precious pockified blades (for to you, and none else, do I dedicate my writings), Alcibiades, in that dialogue

of Plato's, which is entitled *The Banquet*, whilst he was setting forth the praises of his schoolmaster Socrates (without all question the prince of philosophers), amongst other discourses to that purpose, said that he resembled the Silenes. Silenes of old were little boxes, like those we now may see in the shops of apothecaries, painted on the outside with wanton toyish figures, as harpies, satyrs, bridled geese, horned hares, saddled ducks, flying goats, thiller harts, and other such-like counterfeited pictures at discretion, to excite people unto laughter, as Silenus himself, who was the foster-father of good Bacchus, was wont to do; but within those capricious caskets were carefully preserved and kept many rich jewels and fine drugs, such as balm, ambergris, amomon, musk, civet, with several kinds of precious stones, and other things of great price. Just such another thing was Socrates. For to have eyed his outside, and esteemed of him by his exterior appearance, you would not have given the peel of an onion for him, so deformed he was in body, and ridiculous in his gesture. He had a sharp pointed nose, with the look of a bull, and countenance of a fool: he was in his carriage simple, boorish in his apparel, in fortune poor, unhappy in his wives, unfit for all offices in the commonwealth, always laughing, tippling, and merrily carousing to everyone, with continual gibes and jeers, the better by those means to conceal his divine knowledge. Now, opening this box you would have found within it a heavenly and inestimable drug, a more than human understanding, an admirable virtue, matchless learning, invincible courage, unimitable sobriety, certain contentment of mind, perfect assurance, and an incredible misregard of all that for which men commonly do so much watch, run, sail, fight, travel, toil and turmoil themselves.

Whereunto (in your opinion) doth this little flourish of a preamble tend? For so much as you, my good disciples, and some other jolly fools of ease and leisure, reading the pleasant titles of some books of our invention, as *Gargantua*, *Pantagruel*, *Whippot* (*Fessepinte.*), the *Dignity of Codpieces*, of *Pease and Bacon with a Commentary*, &c., are too ready to judge that there is nothing in them but jests, mockeries, lascivious discourse, and recreative lies; because the outside (which is the title) is usually, without any farther inquiry, entertained with scoffing and derision. But truly it is very unbecoming to make so slight account of the works of men, seeing yourselves avouch that it is not the habit makes the monk, many being monasterially accoutred, who inwardly are nothing less than monachal, and that there are of those that wear Spanish capes, who have but little of the valour of Spaniards in them. Therefore is it, that you must open the book, and seriously consider of the matter treated in it. Then shall you find that it containeth things of far higher value than the box did promise; that is to say, that the subject thereof is not so foolish as by the title at the first sight it would appear to be.

And put the case, that in the literal sense you meet with purposes merry and solacious enough, and consequently very correspondent to their inscriptions, yet must not you stop there as at the melody of the charming syrens, but

endeavour to interpret that in a sublimer sense which possibly you intended to have spoken in the jollity of your heart. Did you ever pick the lock of a cupboard to steal a bottle of wine out of it? Tell me truly, and, if you did, call to mind the countenance which then you had. Or, did you ever see a dog with a marrowbone in his mouth,—the beast of all other, says Plato, lib. 2, de Republica, the most philosophical? If you have seen him, you might have remarked with what devotion and circumspectness he wards and watcheth it: with what care he keeps it: how fervently he holds it: how prudently he gobbets it: with what affection he breaks it: and with what diligence he sucks it. To what end all this? What moveth him to take all these pains? What are the hopes of his labour? What doth he expect to reap thereby? Nothing but a little marrow. True it is, that this little is more savoury and delicious than the great quantities of other sorts of meat, because the marrow (as Galen testifieth, 5. facult. nat. & 11. de usu partium) is a nourishment most perfectly elaboured by nature.

In imitation of this dog, it becomes you to be wise, to smell, feel and have in estimation these fair goodly books, stuffed with high conceptions, which, though seemingly easy in the pursuit, are in the cope and encounter somewhat difficult. And then, like him, you must, by a sedulous lecture, and frequent meditation, break the bone, and suck out the marrow,— that is, my allegorical sense, or the things I to myself propose to be signified by these Pythagorical symbols, with assured hope, that in so doing you will at last attain to be both well-advised and valiant by the reading of them: for in the perusal of this treatise you shall find another kind of taste, and a doctrine of a more profound and abstruse consideration, which will disclose unto you the most glorious sacraments and dreadful mysteries, as well in what concerneth your religion, as matters of the public state, and life economical.

Do you believe, upon your conscience, that Homer, whilst he was a-couching his Iliads and Odysseys, had any thought upon those allegories, which Plutarch, Heraclides Ponticus, Eustathius, Cornutus squeezed out of him, and which Politian filched again from them? If you trust it, with neither hand nor foot do you come near to my opinion, which judgeth them to have been as little dreamed of by Homer, as the Gospel sacraments were by Ovid in his Metamorphoses, though a certain gulligut friar (Frere Lubin croquelardon.) and true bacon-picker would have undertaken to prove it, if perhaps he had met with as very fools as himself, (and as the proverb says) a lid worthy of such a kettle.

If you give no credit thereto, why do not you the same in these jovial new chronicles of mine? Albeit when I did dictate them, I thought upon no more than you, who possibly were drinking the whilst as I was. For in the composing of this lordly book, I never lost nor bestowed any more, nor any other time than what was appointed to serve me for taking of my bodily refection, that is, whilst I was eating and drinking. And indeed that is the fittest and most proper hour wherein to write these high matters and deep sciences: as Homer knew very well, the paragon of all philologues, and Ennius, the father of the Latin poets,

as Horace calls him, although a certain sneaking jobernol alleged that his verses smelled more of the wine than oil.

So saith a turlupin or a new start-up grub of my books, but a turd for him. The fragrant odour of the wine, O how much more dainty, pleasant, laughing (Riant, priant, friant.), celestial and delicious it is, than that smell of oil! And I will glory as much when it is said of me, that I have spent more on wine than oil, as did Demosthenes, when it was told him, that his expense on oil was greater than on wine. I truly hold it for an honour and praise to be called and reputed a Frolic Gualter and a Robin Goodfellow; for under this name am I welcome in all choice companies of Pantagruelists. It was upbraided to Demosthenes by an envious surly knave, that his Orations did smell like the sarpler or wrapper of a foul and filthy oil-vessel. For this cause interpret you all my deeds and sayings in the perfectest sense; reverence the cheese-like brain that feeds you with these fair billevezees and trifling jollities, and do what lies in you to keep me always merry. Be frolic now, my lads, cheer up your hearts, and joyfully read the rest, with all the ease of your body and profit of your reins. But hearken, joltheads, you viedazes, or dickens take ye, remember to drink a health to me for the like favour again, and I will pledge you instantly, Tout ares-metyts.

Rabelais to the Reader

Good friends, my Readers, who peruse this Book,  
 Be not offended, whilst on it you look:  
 Denude yourselves of all depraved affection,  
 For it contains no badness, nor infection:  
 'Tis true that it brings forth to you no birth  
 Of any value, but in point of mirth;  
 Thinking therefore how sorrow might your mind  
 Consume, I could no apter subject find;  
 One inch of joy surmounts of grief a span;  
 Because to laugh is proper to the man.

Gaspara Stampa, *Rime (Poems)*, 1554

Dedicatory Letter 'Allo Illustre mio Signore' ('To my Illustrious Lord'),  
 believed to be Count Collaltino di Collalto

Since my love pangs which, for the love I bear Your Lordship, I keep written in diverse of my letters and poems could neither instil in you pity towards me, nor made you so kind as to persuade you to write me a word, I decided to gather them all in this book, to see whether, taken together, they will be able to move you. Here, then, Your Lordship will not find the high sea

of passions, of tears and of my torments, because that is a bottomless sea; but only a little stream of these; and Your Lordship should not think that I did this either to make you conscious of your cruelty, because it cannot be called cruelty since there is no obligation, nor to sadden you; but rather to make you conscious of your greatness and therefore make you happy. Because, seeing that these fruits have been engendered by your harshness, you will imagine how those which will be engendered by your pity will be, if it ever happens that the heaven may turn it into compassion: Oh, noble object, Oh, illustrious object, Oh divine object, since, still tormenting, you help and breed fruit. Therefore, do read, Your Lordship, when you are free from your greater and more treasured cares, the notes of the amorous heavy cares of your most faithful and unhappy Anassilla;<sup>15</sup> and from this shade figure out how she must have experienced and felt them in her soul; and indeed, if my poor and sad home will ever be deemed worthy to welcome its great guest, that is, Your Lordship, I am sure that beds, chambers, halls will narrate the laments, the sobs, the sighs, the gasps, the tears which day and night I diffused, calling Your Lordship's name, although, even amidst my greatest agonies, ever blessing heavens and my good fortune for their cause: and therefore it is much better for you, my Count, to die than to rejoice for anything. But, what am I doing? Why do I unnecessarily bother Your Lordship at length, thus reviling also my poems, as if they were not able to say their reasons and needed somebody else's help? And therefore, committing myself to them, I will cease, praying Your Lordship that, as a last reward of my most faithful servitude, when receiving this poor booklet, you grant me only a sigh which might refresh from afar the memory of your forgotten and forsaken Anassilla. And you, my booklet, custodian of my tears, present yourself before our lord in the humblest possible shape, together with my immaculate devotion. And if, when you are received, you will see those my fatal and immortal eyes a little brightened, then blessed be all our toils and most happy all our hopes; and remain with him for ever in peace.

Thomas Garrard, Dedicatory Letter of *The Arte of Warre*, 1591

To the right Honourable Robert Deurax, Earle of Essex, &c. Knight of the noble order of the Garter, & Maister of her Maiesties horse. Health, honour, and happines, both in this world, and the world to come, hartily wished for. Hauing been requested (right Honourable) by a dying Souldiour, to publish in his behalfe, the xiiij. yeeres fruites of his mercinarie trauaile, in the wars of the Low Countries: I haue thought fit for that the trauaile of well deseruing paines, shal not die together with the dead man, to publish his industrie, so worthy both of knowledge and practise, to the worlds view, for the present

and future benefit of our Nation (as his chiefest care was) that they might with ease, reach into the knowledge of that, the knowing whereof, had cost him time, toyle, blood, and studie. The worke is commended by Captaine *Robert Hichcock* and others, such as experience hath made able to iudge in this honorable profession: so that for me to bestow more praises, vpon a thing so praised, were but to lessen what I wish increased, and to seeme to commend that which doth best commende it selfe. Onely thys ayde I couet, to adde for his greatest grace, that it would please your Lordship, vnder the protection of your honourable acceptance, to deigne the patronage of his painfull endeouours, and then the worke may be assured of defence: as when a well deseruing seruant, is supported by an able defending Maister. Therefore onely by your Lordshyppe I wish this worke may be perfected, whose humors and honours of minde, so well suteth with the honourable matter it treateth on, that as there cannot be (of worldly things) a more worthy subiect then this to write on, so can there not be found a more woorthie Patron, for a discourse of such worth, whose rase assured him a Souldiour whilst the flower was in the bud: and whose timely yeres since, haue witnessed that of his valoure, which neyther time nor yeeres can deface. I pray GOD rayse vp many such mindes, to make our Country of all Nations the most happy: and also that thys worke may stirre vppe the harts of all Noble men, Gentlemen, and all other her Maiesties subiects that minde to professe Armes, that by the exercise of the same they may be the better instructed with greater skill, and so with theyr manly and valiant mindes, to the defence of our most gracious soueraigne Lady, Queene *Elizabeth*, and theyr natiue Countrey. And thus in all humilitie I cease, wishing your Lordshippe such fortunes and happines, as doe euer attend so honourable and vertuous deserts.

Your Lordships deuoted poore freende: Thomas Garrard.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part I (*The Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote of la Mancha*), 1605

#### Dedication

To the Duke of Bejar, Marquis of Gibrleon, Count of Benalcazar and Banares, Vicecount of the Puebla de Alcocer, Master of the towns of Capilla, Curiel and Burguillos

In belief of the good reception and honours that Your Excellency bestows on all sort of books, as prince so inclined to favour good arts, chiefly those who by their nobleness do not submit to the service and bribery of the vulgar, I have determined bringing to light *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of la Mancha*, in shelter of Your Excellency's glamorous name, to whom, with

the obeisance I owe to such grandeur, I pray to receive it agreeably under his protection, so that in this shadow, though deprived of that precious ornament of elegance and erudition that clothe the works composed in the houses of those who know, it dares appear with assurance in the judgment of some who, trespassing the bounds of their own ignorance, use to condemn with more rigour and less justice the writings of others. It is my earnest hope that Your Excellency's good counsel in regard to my honourable purpose, will not disdain the littleness of so humble a service.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part II (*The Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote of la Mancha*), 1615

### Dedication

To the Count of Lemos

These days past, when sending your Excellency my plays, that had appeared in print before being shown on the stage, I said, if I remember well, that Don Quixote was putting on his spurs to go and render homage to Your Excellency. Now I say that 'with his spurs, he is on his way'. Should he reach destination methinks I shall have rendered some service to Your Excellency, as from many parts I am urged to send him off, so as to dispel the loathing and disgust caused by another Don Quixote who, under the name of Second Part, has run masquerading through the whole world. And he who has shown the greatest longing for him has been the great Emperor of China, who wrote me a letter in Chinese a month ago and sent it by a special courier. He asked me, or to be truthful, he begged me to send him Don Quixote, for he intended to found a college where the Spanish tongue would be taught, and it was his wish that the book to be read should be the History of Don Quixote. He also added that I should go and be the rector of this college. I asked the bearer if His Majesty had afforded a sum in aid of my travel expenses. He answered, 'No, not even in thought'. 'Then, brother', I replied, 'you can return to your China, post haste or at whatever haste you are bound to go, as I am not fit for so long a travel and, besides being ill, I am very much without money, while Emperor for Emperor and Monarch for Monarch, I have at Naples the great Count of Lemos, who, without so many petty titles of colleges and rectorships, sustains me, protects me and does me more favour than I can wish for'.

Thus I gave him his leave and I beg mine from you, offering Your Excellency the 'Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda', a book I shall finish within four months, Deo volente, and which will be either the worst or the best that has been composed in our language, I mean of those intended for entertainment; at which I repent of having called it the worst, for, in the opinion of friends, it is bound to attain the summit of possible quality. May Your Excellency

return in such health that is wished you; Persiles will be ready to kiss your hand and I your feet, being as I am, Your Excellency's most humble servant.

From Madrid, this last day of October of the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen.

At the service of Your Excellency:  
Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra

<sup>1</sup> Before it was published, *Utopia* was meant by More to be entitled *Nusquama*.

<sup>2</sup> The monastic orders who formulated the charges against Erasmus' orthodoxy.

<sup>3</sup> A quotation from Petrarch's *Trionfi* ('Tarde non furon mai grazie divine'), here meant as ironic.

<sup>4</sup> Machiavelli had recently been excluded from public office, imprisoned and tortured.

<sup>5</sup> The reference is to Plautus' *Amphitruo*.

<sup>6</sup> 'che non fa scienza / Senza lo ritener aver inteso' ('Paradiso' V, 41-42).

<sup>7</sup> Actually, *Il principe* was dedicated to Lorenzo, Giuliano's nephew.

<sup>8</sup> Filippo Casavecchia, Machiavelli's friend.

<sup>9</sup> Piero Ardinghelli, secretary to Pope Leo X and hostile to Machiavelli.

<sup>10</sup> The letters by *Comici dell'Arte* have been translated from the collection and edition prepared by C. Burattelli, D. Landolfi and A. Zinanni, *Comici dell'Arte. Corrispondenze*, Firenze, Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1993, 2 vols; general editor Siro Ferrone.

<sup>11</sup> Vittoria's father.

<sup>12</sup> Costanza D'Avalos, aunt to Ferrante.

<sup>13</sup> Anaxilla was the name Stampa was given when she became a member of the Accademia dei Dabbiosi.

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Eleonora Chiavetta is retired associate professor of English Language at the University of Palermo. Her research interests are mainly focussed on specialised discourse, genre, letter writing, and discourse analysis in a diachronic perspective, topics on which she has published several essays. She is also interested in botanical and gardening texts written by women in the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. Her latest publications include *La scrittura epistolare in Europa* (2010), co-edited with Margherita Cottone, and *The Popularization of Botanical, Legal, and Commercial Language* (2012), co-edited with Silvana Sciarrino.

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