



## **Constructing Identities and Negotiating Relationships in Late Eighteenth-Century England: Mary Hamilton and her Correspondents at Court**

TINO OUDESLUIJS & NURIA YÁÑEZ-BOUZA\*  
*University of Manchester (UK) & Universidade de Vigo (Spain)*

Received: 31/01/2023. Accepted: 22/09/2023.

### **ABSTRACT**

During the eighteenth century, language became an increasingly valuable commodity for the construction of identities and the negotiation of relationships with others. Additionally, letter writing had emerged as a crucial means of maintaining relationships and forging deeper intimacy between individuals, and correspondence thus constitutes a rich resource for the study of language variation and change in relation to (social) identity, with forms of address as a key strategy in this respect. The current paper examines expressions of direct address and self-reference in Late Modern English ego-documents, more specifically two sets of letters involving Mary Hamilton (1756–1816), sub-governess at Court and a member of the Bluestocking circle. For each set, we discuss intra-speaker variation in the context of both the individual participants involved and the structure of the letters. The findings reveal different strategies through which Hamilton and her correspondents construct their identities and negotiate their relationships with each other, for example by using nicknames and terms of endearment, omitting signatures, or through changes in lexical choices over time.

### **KEYWORDS**

Historical Sociopragmatics; Historical Sociolinguistics; Ego-documents; Forms of address; Identity; Late Modern English; Mary Hamilton.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the eighteenth century, increasingly dynamic social mobility resulted in a greater awareness of individuals' identities in relation to those of other social backgrounds (Nevala,

---

\**Address for correspondence:* Faculty of Philology and Translation, s/n., Campus Lagoas-Marcosende, Universidade de Vigo, 36310 Vigo, Pontevedra, Spain; e-mail: [nuria.y.b@uvigo.gal](mailto:nuria.y.b@uvigo.gal)

Honorary Research Fellow, University of Manchester (UK).

2004: 23–26; Smitterberg, 2021: 16–18). In this context, language became a valuable commodity for constructing identities and negotiating relationships with others (Klein, 1995; Palander-Collin, 2011; Palander-Collin *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, by this time letter writing had become an important means to both “maintain relationships during separation” and deepen “intimacy between two people” (Hannah, 2016: 156), making private correspondence a rich resource for the study of language variation and change in relation to “social meaning and identity construction” (Conde-Silvestre, 2016: 47). Forms of address in particular are seen as a key linguistic and pragmatic strategy in the writing of letters as a social practice, with existing research considering data from both the Early Modern English period (e.g., Nevala, 2004; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995; Raumolin-Brunberg, 1996) and the Late Modern English period (e.g., Baker, 1980; Bijkerk, 2004; Navest, 2004; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1999; 2011; 2014).

This paper builds on previous work by taking a historical sociopragmatic approach to the study of forms of address in private correspondence, much like Nevala’s (2004) research on letter-writing practices, here focussed on expressions of direct address and self-reference in both letters and shorter notes dating from the late eighteenth century. More specifically, we consider two sets of correspondence involving Mary Hamilton (1756–1816), sub-governess to Queen Charlotte and a member of the Bluestocking circle. The first set (139 items, April – December 1779) concerns her correspondence with George, Prince of Wales (later King George IV, 1762–1830), who declared his love for Hamilton and began a pursuit of her affections, forcing her to adopt various strategies to keep him at arm’s length and to preserve her reputation. The second set of letters (138 items, 1779–1790) is between Hamilton and her close friend Charlotte Margaret Gunning (1759–1794), maid of honour to the Queen and with whom Hamilton kept in touch after retiring from Court in 1782. These two sets of letters comprise the majority of the correspondence by Hamilton in *The Mary Hamilton Papers*, a digital edition of her writings: 142 of a total of 170 items addressed to 24 individuals (see also Yáñez-Bouza & Oudesluijs, forthcoming).<sup>1</sup> Of the correspondence by these individuals to Hamilton, by far the bulk is by the Prince of Wales and Gunning, and hence these two sets were selected as they represent the most ‘complete’ correspondence sets of extant material within the collection.

By identifying the different strategies through which Hamilton and her correspondents constructed their identities and negotiated their mutual relationships, for example by using nicknames and terms of endearment, omitting the signature, or exhibiting changes in lexical choices over time, this paper aims to shed more light on the use of forms of address in Late Modern English private correspondence, and will be of interest to those working in historical sociopragmatics and third-wave historical sociolinguistics. Furthermore, when combined with closely scrutinising the unique socio-historical backgrounds of the participants involved, our inclusive approach –considering not only both sides of a correspondence set but also both

addressee-oriented and author-oriented forms of address— proves to be a fruitful way to further explore Late Modern English correspondence.

After contextualising the framework of our research (Section 2), we introduce Mary Hamilton and discuss her relationship with George, Prince of Wales and Charlotte Gunning in Section 3, before discussing the data and methodology in Section 4. In Section 5 we present the results of our analysis of the expressions of direct address towards the recipients and of self-reference by Hamilton, followed by a discussion of our findings in Section 6; for each set, we explore intra-speaker variation with reference to both the participants involved and the structure of the letter. Section 7 offers some concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

## 2. FRAMEWORK

In the project *Unlocking the Mary Hamilton Papers*, our approach to the study of forms of address chiefly builds on the research carried out on Early Modern English data by Nevala (2004, 2009), and is furthermore informed by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995) and Raumolin-Brunberg (1996). More specifically, we are interested in using Nevala's (2004) detailed typology of direct address (e.g., "My dear friend") and subscription formulae (e.g., "ever yours affectionately"), as well as in mapping the politeness continuum identified for Early Modern correspondence onto the Late Modern period (see also Yáñez-Bouza & Oudesluijs, forthcoming). As Nevala points out, her work is "deeply embedded in, and makes use of, both historical sociolinguistics and historical pragmatics," and she takes the position that such theoretical frameworks are "inseparable and complementary parts of a whole" (Nevala, 2004: 4). Nevala's perspective, much like that of Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), is sociopragmatic in the sense of the term provided by Leech (1983: 10), in that variation and change are investigated at a more "local" level of language use by scrutinising the social and societal dimensions involved (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995: 542; Nevala, 2009: 239). Recent work seeking to combine frameworks and perspectives from the fields of historical sociolinguistics and historical pragmatics has led to the emergence of the field of historical sociopragmatics, as proposed and discussed by Culpeper (2010, 2011) and Włodarczyk and Taavitsainen (2017), the essence of which lies in the study of "language use in its situational context, and how those situational contexts engender norms which speakers engage or exploit for pragmatic purposes" (Culpeper, 2011: 4).

The development of historical sociopragmatics has also "been aided by separate inputs from historical sociolinguistics" (Culpeper, 2010: 87), and identity construction in particular has increasingly been explored in both fields, mainly in relation to the research areas of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014; see also Nevalainen &

Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995) and communities of practice (Conde-Silvestre, 2016; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005). Especially in third-wave variationist sociolinguistics, identities are “regarded as being constructed and reconstructed; they are dynamic and changeable” while, at the same time, “[l]anguage and identity cannot be separated or correlated; they are co-constitutive” (Drummond & Schlee, 2016: 53). In third-wave sociolinguistic studies, styles, rather than variables, are considered to be a “means of constructing identities”, hence shifting the focus from linguistic varieties to “the means used by individual speakers in emergent interaction (and performance) to stylise themselves in different ways” (Watts, 2015: 8). As subsequently pointed out by Hernández-Campoy and Conde-Silvestre (2015: 20) in the context of the third-wave sociolinguistic framework, “letters may also be useful to analyse and account for the motivation(s) for variability in individuals and their stylistic choices for the construction of identity.” Indeed, letter writing constitutes a “situated activity where a letter is written for a specific recipient and purpose,” and in this light identity, which can be understood as social agency, can be investigated in the context of the interaction between letter writers and recipients (Palander-Collin *et al.*, 2013: 290–291; see also Pahta *et al.*, 2010).

The eighteenth century was a period dominated by linguistic correctness, propriety, and etiquette (Jucker, 2020: 117–134), and the use of appropriate forms of address had become a customary feature of correspondence (see e.g. Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, 1999: 104–107; Bijkerk, 2004; Navest, 2004; Fitzmaurice, 2008: 87–92), and a key means by which individuals were able to construct their social identity in the context of their relationships with others (cf. Nevala, 2004: 85). Besides existing work on eighteenth-century material, the work that inspired our research on forms of address in terms of methodology (see also Yáñez-Bouza & Oudesluijs, forthcoming; Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming a, forthcoming b) has largely focussed on opening formulae in the salutation and body parts of the letter from the Early Modern period (Nevala, 2004: 185–256; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995; Raumolin-Brunberg, 1996). However, as Nevala (2004: 137, n.9) points out, “the placing of the subscription formulae,” a strategy of self-reference on the part of the writer, “follows them closely”. As such, in this paper we take a broad approach and consider the letter as a whole by scrutinising both addressee-oriented and author-oriented forms of address. Formulae expressing direct address to the recipient reflect the writer’s evaluation or interpretation of their social relation, usually included in the opening salutation, and self-reference expressions carry a dual function in that they “describe the status or the emotional state of the writer at the same time as they address the recipient of the letter” (Nevala, 2004: 95). Moreover, in the context of subscription formulae, self-references “are used to close a letter, and they reflect more the image the writer has of him/herself in the relationship with the recipient” (2004: 128). Such an inclusive approach is key in sociopragmatic analyses, especially in the context of forms of address which might be construed as an index of politeness (2004: 126).<sup>2</sup>

### 3. MARY HAMILTON AND HER CORRESPONDENTS

Mary Hamilton was the only child of Lady Mary Catherine Hamilton (née Dufresne, d. 1778) and Charles Hamilton (1721–1771), a soldier and the son of Lord Archibald Hamilton (1673–1754). She lost her father when she was fifteen and spent her adolescence between the homes of her mother and various guardians and relatives. She was well-educated, and in 1777 she was recruited as a sub-governess by Queen Charlotte to assist with the education of the princesses. Hamilton retired from Court in late 1782 but kept in touch with other governesses through correspondence, including Martha Goldsworthy, Lady Dartrey, and Charlotte Gunning, maid of honour to Queen Charlotte (see below). After leaving Court, she became a member of the Bas Bleu (Bluestocking) circle, and counted Hannah More, Frances Burney, and Mary Delany among her literary friends. She was not a published writer like fellow Bluestockings Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Carter, but she was part of their social and literary network and would frequently dine at the homes of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Horace Walpole, with whom she also corresponded. In 1785 she married John Dickenson (c.1757–1842), son of John Dickenson Senior of Birch Hall, near Manchester. They had one child, Louisa Dickenson (later Anson) and lived variously in Taxal (Derbyshire), Leighton Buzzard (Bedfordshire), and London. Mary Hamilton fell ill and died in 1816.

Like many other literate women of her time and social circles, Hamilton was an avid letter-writer who also kept diaries in which she recorded the daily activities, conversations, and private thoughts of herself and others. In addition, she compiled a number of manuscript books containing a catalogue of curiosities, an anthology of French verse, transcripts of verse and prose, and many copies of correspondence (both in- and out-letters). Hamilton also arranged large collections of journal letters (some original, others copies) in bound form, and since she organised them chronologically, they served a similar purpose to her diaries. All this material, compiled in *The Mary Hamilton Papers (c.1740–c.1850)*, provides unparalleled insights into not only Hamilton's day-to-day life, but also that of many of her contemporaries, including members of the royal household.

#### 3.1. Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales

During her time at Court, Hamilton became acquainted with the members of the royal family, including George, Prince of Wales and future King George IV, who was 16 years old when he took a romantic interest in Hamilton (six years his senior). Based on the material that has survived, he began writing to her in April 1779 and declared his love to her the following month. This came at a particularly difficult time for Hamilton, who was struggling under the weight of her duties at Court and had recently lost her mother. Before responding, Hamilton would have considered a number of issues, most notably her role at Court and how to avoid

offending the Prince (and the rest of the royal family), whilst also avoiding any perception that she was toying with his affections. As Coulombe (2021: 69) points out, “[a]ny whisper of an illicit liaison with the prince would have cast Hamilton as an immoral gold-digger, incurred the wrath of the king and queen, shocked and alienated her friends and tarnished her social capital and marriage prospects for good.” In her reply to the Prince, Hamilton was clear: “I can without injuring my honor accept your friendship – to listen to more I should justly forfeit the [e]steem you say you have for me” (GEO/ADD/3/83/1).<sup>3</sup> The Prince, however, continued to write to Hamilton, voicing his love for her, sending various gifts, expressing jealousy of her male friends, and even threatening to kill himself when Hamilton mentioned wanting to leave Court. Throughout 1779, Hamilton sought to balance her rejection of the Prince’s advances with maintaining her position at Court, until in December of that year the Prince fell in love with the actress Mary Robinson. He and Hamilton exchanged a few more letters to each other that month, but their correspondence ended before the new year.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2. Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Margaret Gunning

Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Margaret Gunning had become close friends during their time at Court and they continued to correspond after Hamilton left in 1782. Gunning was born in 1759 as the third child to Sir Richard Gunning and his second wife Anne (née Sutton) in Horton, not far from Northampton. From 1779 until her marriage to the Honourable Colonel Stephen Digby in 1790, she was a maid of honour to Queen Charlotte. Hamilton and Gunning started corresponding in 1779 and discussed various subjects, ranging from literature, parties, the theatre and the opera, to their romantic lives, health complaints, and the royal family. Their correspondence contains much general news about society as well as gossip about their acquaintances and friends, and it is clear from the contents of their letters that they were close friends. They had much in common, as both were from (near) Northampton, were about the same age, and were well-educated. Furthermore, when Gunning began working at Court, Hamilton was struggling with her position there (see above) and had recently lost her mother; it seems likely that Gunning was a welcome friend through this period. Gunning died in 1794 but their correspondence seems to have ended in 1790 (see also Figure 1 below), the year Gunning married.<sup>5</sup>

## 4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Data

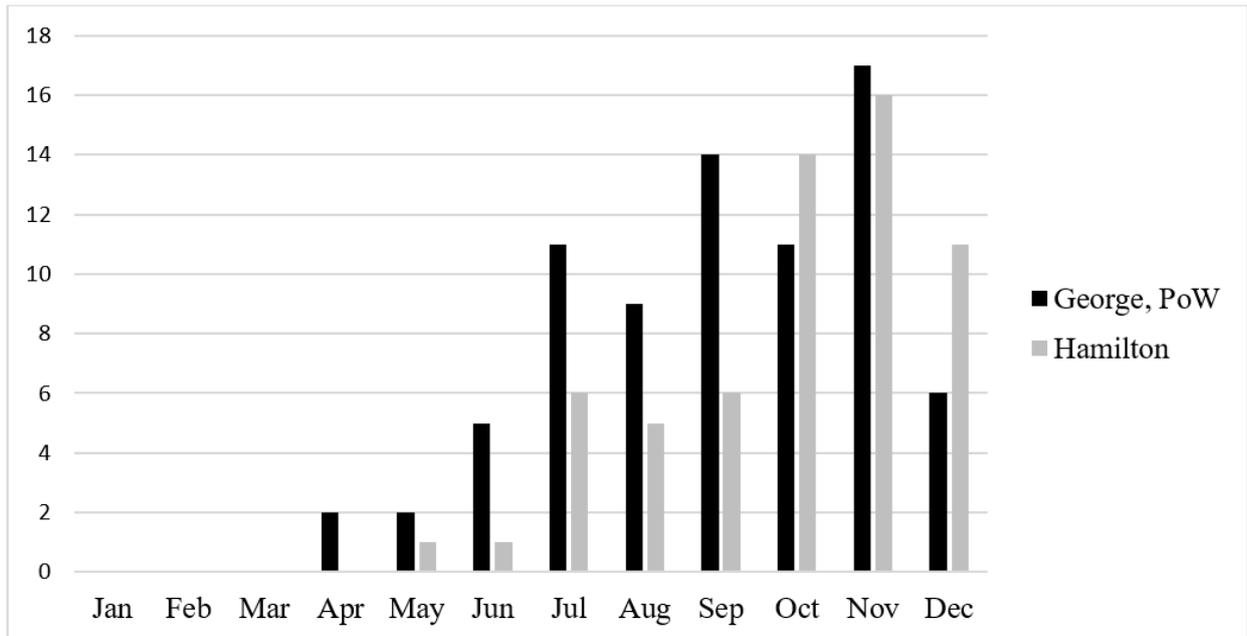
The data analysed in this paper are documented in *The Mary Hamilton Papers*, a digital edition of Mary Hamilton’s private correspondence, diaries, commonplace books, and other

items (cf. Crawley 2014; Denison *et al.*, forthcoming). As explained in the introduction, we focus here on two sets of correspondence, including letters and shorter notes: 1) between Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales, dating from April to December 1779, and 2) between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning, covering the period from 1779 to 1790. Table 1 provides an overview of the data, which in total comprise 277 items (109,148 words). Figures 1 and 2 display the chronological distribution of each correspondence set, excluding undated material; this concerns one item by Hamilton in the set between her and the Prince, and eight items by Hamilton from the set between her and Gunning.

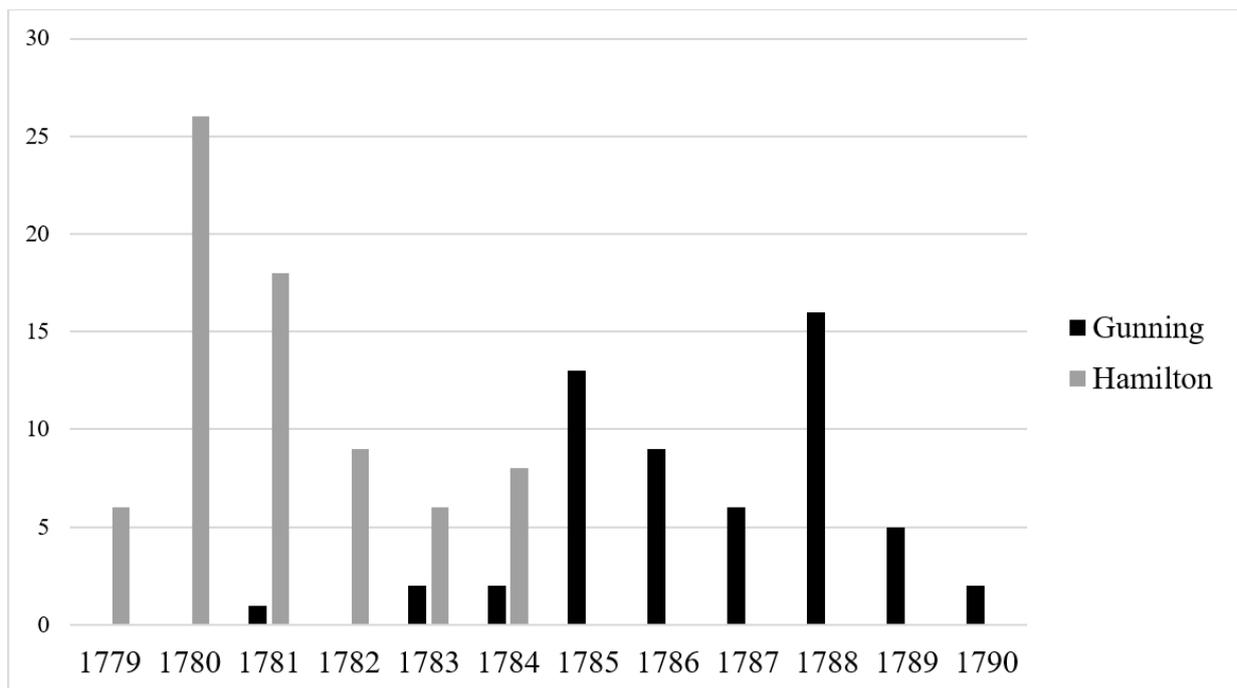
**Table 1.** Number of items and word counts for each correspondence set.

Correspondence set		Items	Words	Total (items)	Total (words)
Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales (1779)	Hamilton to the Prince (GEO/ADD/3/83/nn)	61	12,361	139	54,540
	The Prince to Hamilton (GEO/ADD/3/82/nn)	78	42,179		
Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning (1779–1790)	Hamilton to Gunning (HAM/1/15/2/nn)	81	26,738	138	54,608
	Gunning to Hamilton (HAM/1/15/1/nn)	57	27,870		
<b>Total</b>	<b>Hamilton's out-letters</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>39,099</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>109,148</b>
	<b>Hamilton's in-letters</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>70,049</b>		

Of the 277 items, 37 have been identified as copies or drafts: GEO/ADD/3/82/72 (by the Prince to Hamilton), GEO/ADD/3/83/29 and GEO/ADD/3/83/45 (by Hamilton to the Prince), and HAM/1/15/2/31 (a volume containing 34 copies of letters and notes from Hamilton to Gunning). We are aware that some of the forms of address in the copied and draft material examined here might vary from their fair copy counterparts, but based on our current understanding of Hamilton's copying practices and as discussed elsewhere (see Oudesluijs, forthcoming), this seems unlikely. Some other items appear to be incomplete (e.g., HAM/1/15/2/7), and as such a few self-reference expressions might be missing, most notably the subscription and the signature.



**Figure 1.** Number of items in the correspondence between Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales in 1779 (excluding undated material).



**Figure 2.** Number of items in the correspondence between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning over time (excluding undated material).

## 4.2. Methodology

The digital edition of *The Mary Hamilton Papers* incorporates high-resolution images of all the material –written either by or to Mary Hamilton– we have thus far identified. Furthermore, it offers transcriptions of a large body of Hamilton’s diaries and private correspondence (nearly 1 million words at present). During the transcription process we created specific XML tags in line with TEI guidelines to mark up relevant strings of text containing linguistic strategies relating to addressee-oriented and author-oriented forms of address (see Table 2). These concern nominal phrases with head nouns such as terms of friendship, kinship, or endearment, as well as personal names and honorific terms. Pronominal forms of address such as “you” go beyond the scope of the specific research strand within the project. The four structural parts of the letter were tagged as follows: opening, body, and closing on the ‘inside’, and superscription on the ‘outside’ of the letter. Expressions of direct address may appear in the opening section (including the salutation formula and the first lines of the text), in the main body of text, and in the closing part of a letter (both the closing lines of the main text and the subscription part). Self-reference expressions may occur in the main body of text and in the closing part of a letter, i.e. in the subscription formulae and/or the signature.

**Table 2.** Customised XML tags for forms of direct address and self-reference expressions in *The Mary Hamilton Papers*.

Address form	Part of the letter	XML tag	Example
Direct address	Opening (salutation)	<salute n="opening">	“ <i>Dear Miss Hamilton</i> ”
	Opening (opening lines in the main body)	<seg type="openSalute">	“I hasten <i>my dear Friend</i> to thank you for your letter”
	Body (main text)	<seg type="bodySalute">	“But Alas! <i>my Astrea</i> tis hard to know”
	Body (closing lines)	<seg type="bodySalute" n="closing">	“Good night <i>My Miranda</i> — pleasant dreams,”
	Closing (subscription)	<seg type="closeSalute">	“Adieu <i>my friend</i> ever sincerely yours”
Self-reference	Body (main text)	<seg type="author">	“I am <i>your Friend</i> ”
	Closing (subscription)	<seg type="closeFormula">	“Adieu my friend <i>ever sincerely yours</i> ”
	Closing (signature)	<signed>	<i>Mary Hamilton</i>

The relevant strings containing forms of address were extracted together with metadata pertaining to the correspondence set from the Mary Hamilton Papers Salutations Database in Heurist –an open-source online database builder and content management system publisher designed for humanities research data and collections.

## 5. RESULTS

In this section we describe the use of expressions of direct address and self-reference in the two sets of correspondence, with regard to both the overall frequencies of the data attested in different parts of the letter and the vocabulary employed by the letter writers. Section 5.1 is concerned with forms of direct address in the opening, main body, and closing sections of the items, first for the correspondence between Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales (Section 5.1.1) and then for that between Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning (Section 5.1.2). Following this, in Section 5.2 we analyse the self-reference expressions, in terms of both frequency and lexical choices, in the main body of text, closing salutations, and signatures – first in Hamilton’s correspondence with George, Prince of Wales (Section 5.2.1) and then with Charlotte Gunning (Section 5.2.2).

### 5.1. Expressions of direct address

Table 3 provides an overview of the number of expressions of direct address in the two correspondence sets. Columns 2–5 indicate in which sections of the items they occur, as well as in how many items, with the percentage of the total number of items in each corresponding set (see first column). From this overview it becomes clear that both the Prince and Gunning used more forms of direct address in each section of their notes and letters compared to Hamilton, and that they used at least one direct address form in each piece of correspondence to her. In contrast, Hamilton does not always do this in her writings: only 39 of the 61 letters and notes to the Prince, and only 59 of the 81 items to Gunning contain an expression of direct address. In other words, a total of 44 items by Hamilton do not contain any form of direct address, with no particular pattern with regard to either the chronology of the correspondence or the length of the item (e.g., longer letters versus shorter notes). In these 44 items, Hamilton resorts to pronominal forms instead.

A closer examination of the structural parts of the items reveals that both the Prince and Gunning address Hamilton more often in the opening section of their correspondence, that is, in the opening salutation formula or the first lines of the main body of text. Next in terms of overall frequency is the closing section (the concluding lines of the main body of text or the closing subscription formula), followed by the main body of text, in which the Prince addresses Hamilton in 79% of his letters, and Gunning in 51% of her letters. A

different pattern emerges in Hamilton's writings: she addresses the Prince directly only a third of the time in the opening section and in the main body of her correspondence, and only a fifth of the time in the closing sections. These numbers are somewhat higher in Hamilton's writings to Gunning, showing divergent trends from her correspondence with the Prince; she addresses Gunning directly in approximately half of the opening sections, and about 40% in the main body and closing sections.

**Table 3.** Expressions of direct address in the opening, body, and closing sections.

<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>Opening</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Closing</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hamilton to the Prince (61 items)	20 20 items (33%)	42 21 items (34%)	14 13 items (21%)	76 39 items (64%)
The Prince to Hamilton (78 items)	78 78 items (100%)	264 62 items (79%)	112 64 items (82%)	454 78 items (100%)
<b>Subtotal</b> <b>(139 items)</b>	<b>98</b> <b>98 items (71%)</b>	<b>306</b> <b>83 items (60%)</b>	<b>126</b> <b>77 items (55%)</b>	<b>530</b> <b>117 items (84%)</b>
Hamilton to Gunning (81 items)	43 43 items (53%)	44 32 items (40%)	34 31 items (38%)	121 59 items (73%)
Gunning to Hamilton (57 items)	53 53 items (93%)	61 29 items (51%)	40 38 items (67%)	154 57 items (100%)
<b>Subtotal</b> <b>(138 items)</b>	<b>96</b> <b>96 items (70%)</b>	<b>105</b> <b>61 items (44%)</b>	<b>74</b> <b>69 items (50%)</b>	<b>275</b> <b>116 items (84%)</b>
<b>Total</b> <b>(277 items)</b>	<b>194</b> <b>194 items (70%)</b>	<b>411</b> <b>144 items (52%)</b>	<b>200</b> <b>146 items (53%)</b>	<b>805</b> <b>233 items (84%)</b>

### *5.1.1. Correspondence between Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales*

Mary Hamilton addresses George, Prince of Wales in the opening section of her notes and letters 20 times, with expressions in the salutation formula (5) and in the first lines of the main body of text (15). The two types of opening address are mutually exclusive, i.e., no individual item contains more than one opening salutation. In the main body of text, Hamilton addresses the Prince 42 times in 21 items. The number of expressions here ranges from 1 to 5 per item, which generally correlates with the length of the respective item. As regards the closing sections of Hamilton's correspondence, she addresses the Prince directly 14 times in 13 items, with one having two closing expressions: "my friend" in the concluding lines of the main body of text, and "mon Ami" in the closing salutation (GEO/ADD/3/83/6).

Concerning Hamilton's vocabulary, in the opening sections of her correspondence she almost exclusively uses "my friend" (17) when addressing the Prince, with one instance of "my dear friend," one of the honorific term "Sir," and one note which has "My" on its own, known to be a copy or draft. Similarly, in the main body of text Hamilton uses mostly "my friend" to address the Prince (35), followed by "Sir" (2), "my dear friend" (1), and "my young friend" (1). Hamilton furthermore refers to the Prince in the main body of text as "such a son" (1), "such a Prince" (1), and "a Brother" (1) (see also the figurative use of "Sister" by the Prince to address Hamilton, discussed below in this section and in Section 5.2.1). In the closing sections, Hamilton only uses "my friend," 13 times in English and once in French as "mon ami", as already mentioned. In his study of John Wesley's correspondence (1721–1739), Baker (1980: 48) established a hierarchy of terms for opening salutation formulae in eighteenth-century letter writers, ranging from the most formal and distant to the least formal and intimate: Sir/Madam → Dear Sir/Dear Madam → My dear Mr. -- / Mrs. -- / Miss X → My dear brother / sister → Dear James/Jane etc. → Dear Jemmy/Jenny, etc. (see also Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, 1999; 2014: 65–68). Expanding this hierarchy to other structural parts of the letter, Hamilton's use of "Sir" thus stands in stark contrast with her use of "my friend", a term which, incidentally, had not been included in Baker's overview (cf. Fens-de Zeeuw, 2009: 395). It appears that, over time, Hamilton became more intimate regarding her choice of direct address towards the Prince, since the three instances of "Sir" occur relatively early in Hamilton's correspondence (July and August 1779, see also Figure 1). However, she uses "(my) friend" in the same letters as "Sir", and, as Yáñez-Bouza (forthcoming b: Section 5.3) points out, the infrequent use of the honorific term can perhaps best be explained as a distancing strategy on Hamilton's part in specific contexts, such as an apology or when claiming "the tone of respect that her reputation deserves."

George, Prince of Wales, in his turn, addresses Mary Hamilton in the openings of his correspondence in all of the 78 items, 56 times in the opening salutation formula and 22 in the opening lines of the main body of text. The two types of opening expressions of direct address are again mutually exclusive. As regards the main body, the Prince addresses Hamilton 264 times in 62 items. The number of direct forms of address ranges from 1 to 14 per individual item, which are usually –though not always– in line with the word count of the respective item. In the closing parts of his correspondence, the Prince addresses Hamilton 112 times in 64 items, with 48 items having multiple closing expressions of direct address. The high frequency of repetition here is largely due to the Prince's tendency to frequently add postscripts to his writings,<sup>6</sup> all of which he ends with a direct address form to Hamilton. For example, GEO/ADD/3/82/61 contains both "ma très chere Sœur, mon Amie, ma Miranda" in the closing lines of the main body of text, and "toujours chère" in the closing salutation of the postscript.

Regarding lexical choice, the Prince uses a variety of modifiers of endearment and head nouns in the opening salutations: “dearest dearest dearest” (53), “dearest” (8), “ever dearest” (6), “ever dearest dearest dearest” (4), “sweetest” (3), and “dear” (3) for adjectives; and “friend” (60), “sister” (40), “Miranda” (26), “Miss Hamilton” (4), and “creature” (2) as head nouns. As pointed out above, the terms “Brother” and “Sister” occur in the correspondence between the Prince and Hamilton to address each other figuratively, expressing greater familiarity and intimacy compared to “Sir” or “Madam” (cf. Baker, 1980: 48). They start using these terms around the same time, with the Prince first addressing Hamilton as “friend & Sister” on 26 July 1779 (GEO/ADD/3/82/17) and Hamilton using “sister” to refer to herself on 1 August 1779 (GEO/ADD/3/83/45) (see also Section 5.2.1). As regards “Brother”, the Prince refers to himself as such from 28 July 1779 onwards, as in “Your sincerely attached Friend & Brother” (GEO/ADD/3/82/18; see also Section 5.2.1), while in Hamilton’s letters it appears only once, on 10 October 1779.

It is often the case that the Prince uses multiple nouns, e.g., “My dearest, dearest, dearest Sister, Friend, Miranda” (GEO/ADD/3/82/52), and several different combinations of the above modifiers and nouns occur in the data. Interestingly, the four occurrences of “Miss Hamilton” are all found in the salutation “My dearest Miss Hamilton” in the first four items of their correspondence (GEO/ADD/3/82/1–4). In addition, the Prince uses the nickname “Miranda” in the opening salutation only from 11 October onwards, after which he uses it in the opening sections of his correspondence extensively, with 26 of the 30 remaining items containing “Miranda” –both on its own, e.g., “My dearest Miranda,” (GEO/ADD/3/82/57), and in combination with other head nouns, e.g., “My dearest, dearest, dearest Sister, Friend, Miranda,” quoted above.

The Prince of Wales’s vocabulary in the main body of his writings to Hamilton involves a wider range of adjectives and head nouns, including all of the above from the opening salutations, plus “amiable,” “sincere,” “obliging,” “kind,” “firm,” “angelic,” “loveliest,” “agreeable,” “ever-adored,” “tender,” “true,” “blessed,” “gracious,” “delightful” for adjectives; and “girl,” “lady,” “gentlewoman,” “woman,” “comforter,” and “madam” for nouns. Additional phrases describing Hamilton include “whom I so tenderly love” (GEO/ADD/3/82/35), “yourself in whom my whole happiness contents” (GEO/ADD/3/82/18), as well as the occasional French phrase such as “Tout ce qui m’est chère au monde” (GEO/ADD/3/82/15). It is worth noting that descriptive passages of this kind occur only in the earlier items of this correspondence set, and from October 1779 onwards the forms of direct address in the main body of text generally become shorter and more uniform, e.g., “my Miranda,” “my sister,” “my friend.” Additionally, as was the case in the opening parts of the Prince’s correspondence, the nickname “Miranda” occurs for the first time in a letter from 6 October 1779 and was subsequently used 78 times from a total of 129

additional expressions in the main body of text after this date. This change in use of direct address towards Hamilton appears to be related to the new role she adopted towards the Prince in the autumn of 1779, namely that of “his severe moral adviser” and “stern instructor”. This transpires after the Prince had asked her “to make all the remarks you can upon my conduct, give me all the advice you can,” offering Hamilton “some respite from the romantic role in which the prince insisted on casting her” (Coulombeau, 2021: 70).

In the closing sections of his correspondence, the Prince uses “Miss Hamilton” only four times, which again occur in the first four items of the set (see above). The use of the nickname “Miranda” also reveals the same pattern as that mentioned above, namely that it occurs first in a letter dated 6 October 1779, after which date 21 of 50 closing expressions of direct address contain the nickname. Besides “Miss Hamilton” and “Miranda,” the most frequent lexical items in the closing sections of his correspondence include “dearest (dearest dearest)” and “ever dear(est),” together with “friend” and “sister.” As we can see, the items identified in the closing salutation frequently parallel those in the opening of the letter, a symmetry recommended in eighteenth-century letter-writing manuals such as George Fisher’s (1735) *The Instructor* and the highly popular anonymous work *The Complete Letter-Writer* (see Baker, 1980: 59). Another interesting pattern here is the use of French: 48 of 112 closing salutations include a French phrase, usually “*toujours chère*” (36 times, mostly in postscripts), and the French equivalents of English phrases, e.g., “*ma très très très cher Amie & Sœur*,” “*ma Miranda*,” etc. The Prince tends to use either French or English for a closing salutation and “*toujours chère*” is added after either language, usually in a postscript. Similarly, “*toujours de même*” is often added after the closing salutation (also in either language) and his signature “Palemon”. As reported in other letter collections, code-switching between English and French was not uncommon in eighteenth-century correspondence. For instance, Nurmi and Pahta (2012) observe that women’s writing witnessed a significant increase in code-switching practices during this century, with French being the language most frequently employed after English. In fact, it seems that, for correspondence in particular, “genre-specific conventions where switching occurs [included] the address outside the letter, but also dates, as well as opening and closing formulae.” (Nurmi & Pahta, 2012: 53; see also Pahta & Nurmi, 2007).

### ***5.1.2. Correspondence between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning***

In her correspondence with Gunning, Hamilton addresses her friend with an opening salutation 43 times in total, with the direct address expressions in the salutation formula (15) and those in the first lines of the main body of text (28) being mutually exclusive. In the main body, Hamilton addresses Gunning 44 times in 32 items, with the number of direct address expressions ranging from 1 to 4 per item, which again seems to correlate with the item’s

respective length. Concerning direct address expressions in the closing sections of Hamilton's correspondence, she addresses Gunning 34 times in 31 items, with three items containing two closing expressions, always in the final lines of the main body of text, e.g., "my Astrea" and "my Dear Love!" (HAM/1/15/2/3).

With regard to Hamilton's vocabulary, in the opening of her correspondence all but one of the 43 expressions of direct address begin with "my ...,"<sup>7</sup> followed by a modifier conveying endearment, including "Dear" (17), "Dearest" (8), and "Beloved" (2). The modifier "amiable" occurs once, and Hamilton omits pre-modification in 17 items. The head noun most frequently used is "friend" (21), but terms of endearment are also common, including "love" (7), "Dear" (7), and "Dearest" (2). "Astrea", which is Gunning's nickname, is likewise attested (5).<sup>8</sup> No particular chronological pattern becomes apparent, except regarding Hamilton's use of "Astrea", which occurs 4 times in 1780 and once in 1781, but not again after that. However, this might be a reflection of the amount of data that has survived from each year of writing (see Figure 2) rather than a (un)conscious choice on Hamilton's part to no longer use the nickname in the opening of her correspondence after 1781. In light of Gunning's use of "Miranda" for Hamilton in 1781 (see also below), both writers appear to use their nicknames only in the early stages of their mutual correspondence.

In the main body of text, Hamilton addresses Gunning 14 times as "friend," usually in the construction "my ... friend" (13), and usually with a pre-modifier of endearment: "dear" (6), "lovely" (1), and "dearest" (1). On 12 occasions she calls her "my dear(est)," and 11 times she uses Gunning's nickname "Astrea", which is preceded by "my" in nine instances and once with "her", after referring to herself in the third person. "Astrea" also appears without pre-modification once. As observed with regard to the opening expressions, Hamilton's use of "Astrea" in the main text is restricted to the earlier period of their correspondence (1779–1780) when both worked as governesses at Court.<sup>9</sup> Finally, Hamilton uses "love" as a head noun to address Gunning seven times in the main body of text.

In the closing sections of Hamilton's correspondence with Gunning, we find the same lexical choices as in the opening parts and the main body, with a rich variety of simple and complex phrases: "my dear" (8), "my dear dear friend" (5), "my dear friend" (4), "my Astrea" (3), "my friend" (2), "my dearest" (2), "my dearest friend" (2), "my dearest dearest friend" (1), "my love" (1), "my dearest love" (1), "my dear love" (1), "my best love" (1), "my beloved" (1), to which two French phrases are added: "ma belle & chere Amie" (1) and "ma tres Chere" (1). On the symmetry between the opening and closing salutations, as noted above, this was a common recommendation in contemporaneous manuals of letter writing. In terms of chronology, we again observe the early use of "my Astrea" (twice in 1779 and once in 1780), as opposed to the absence of this nickname in later correspondence.

For her part, Charlotte Gunning directly addresses Mary Hamilton with an opening salutation in 53 items, 39 of which are inside the opening salutation and 14 occur in the opening lines of the main body of text. Similar to Hamilton's writings to Gunning, the two types of opening salutation are mutually exclusive. With regard to expressions of direct address in the main body, Gunning addresses Hamilton directly 61 times in 29 items. The number of expressions per item ranges from 1 to 5, and again generally correlates with the length of the respective item. Lastly, Gunning addresses Hamilton 40 times in the closing parts of her correspondence, chiefly in the final lines of the main body of text (34), but also within the subscription formula (6). These occur in 38 items, with two items having two forms of direct address: "my dear friend," twice in the closing lines of the main body of text in HAM/1/15/1/31, and "my dear friend" and "my very dear friend" before the closing subscription formula in HAM/1/15/1/36.

Each of the 53 expressions of direct address in the opening of Gunning's correspondence begins with the first-person possessive determiner "my ..." followed by the term of endearment "dear" (occasionally on its own but also duplicated for emphasis), the superlative "dearest," or the intensifier "very dear." These in turn are almost always followed by the head noun "friend" (42). Gunning uses Hamilton's nickname "Miranda" on one occasion, which interestingly is in the earliest surviving item in the set: HAM/1/15/1/1(2), 2 June 1781. The remaining ten expressions in the opening salutations concern either "my dear" (9) or "my dearest" (1).

Similar expressions are found in both the main body of text and the closing sections of Gunning's correspondence to Hamilton: in the main text she often writes "my dear friend" (34) and "my dear" (23), and occasionally "my very dear friend" (2), "my dearest friend" (1), and "this friend" (1) when referring to Hamilton in the third person. In the closing sections, Gunning writes "my dear friend" (25), "my dear" (9), and also "my dear dear friend" (3), "my very dear friend" (2), and "dear friend" (1).

## 5.2. Self-reference expressions

Table 4 provides an overview of the number of self-reference expressions in the two correspondence sets, with columns 2–5 indicating in which sections of the items they occur, as well as in how many items, with the percentage of the total number of items in each corresponding set (see first column). Gunning and the Prince employ different practices in their correspondence with Hamilton: whereas Gunning refers to herself mostly through her signature and in references in the closing formulae (she hardly ever refers to herself in the main body of text), the Prince includes many more self-reference expressions in all three sections. In contrast, Hamilton includes fewer self-references in her writings to both correspondents. In her letters to Gunning, she seems to mirror her friend's practice by

referring to herself mostly in her signature and less in the closing formulae and the main body of text. However, in her writings to the Prince, Hamilton never includes a signature, possibly due to the nature of the material that has survived (Yáñez-Bouza forthcoming a: Section 4.3; see also Section 6 below). Self-reference expressions do occur in the closing part and in the main body with a similar frequency and, overall, more often than in her correspondence to Gunning

**Table 4.** Expressions of self-reference in the body and closing sections of the correspondence.

Correspondence	Body	Closing	Signature	Total
Hamilton to the Prince (61 items)	21 15 items (25%)	16 16 items (26%)	0 0 items (0%)	37 24 items (39%)
The Prince to Hamilton (78 items)	37 26 items (33%)	140 73 items (94%)	68 59 items (76%)	245 76 items (97%)
<b>Subtotal</b> <b>(139 items)</b>	<b>58</b> <b>41 items (29%)</b>	<b>156</b> <b>89 items (64%)</b>	<b>68</b> <b>59 items (42%)</b>	<b>282</b> <b>100 items (72%)</b>
Hamilton to Gunning (81 items)	7 7 items (9%)	18 18 items (22%)	32 32 items (40%)	57 36 items (44%)
Gunning to Hamilton (57 items)	2 2 items (4%)	35 35 items (61%)	38 38 items (67%)	75 41 items (72%)
<b>Subtotal</b> <b>(138 items)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>9 items (7%)</b>	<b>53</b> <b>53 items (38%)</b>	<b>70</b> <b>70 items (51%)</b>	<b>132</b> <b>77 items (56%)</b>
<b>Total</b> <b>(277 items)</b>	<b>67</b> <b>50 items (18%)</b>	<b>209</b> <b>142 items (51%)</b>	<b>138</b> <b>129 items (47%)</b>	<b>414</b> <b>177 items (64%)</b>

### 5.2.1. Correspondence between Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales

In her correspondence with George, Prince of Wales, Hamilton refers to herself 37 times, 16 of which occur in the closing formulae and 21 in the main body of text. She refers to herself in the closing formulae largely as “friend” (11), but also with the subscription formula “yours” (3) and the head noun “sister” (1) in a figurative sense. She uses several modifiers for these, including “sincere(ly),” “attached,” “faithful,” “affectionate,” “tenderest,” and “true.” Once she writes “toujours de même,” and once “toujours la même.”<sup>10</sup> When referring to herself in the main body of text, Hamilton again mainly uses “friend” (17) and, occasionally, “sister” (3). On one other occasion at the start of her correspondence with the Prince she refers to herself as “your inferior” (GEO/ADD/3/83/2), and towards the end of their correspondence she writes “poor Miranda” with irony (GEO/ADD/3/83/23).

In his correspondence to Hamilton, the Prince refers to himself 245 times in 76 items. Of these, 140 occur in the closing formula, e.g., “Your ever affectionate Friend” (GEO/ADD/3/82/78), 68 are in the signature, and 37 are self-references in the main body of text, e.g., “your friend” (GEO/ADD/3/82/17), “your Brother who loves you so much, & which I have so long promised you” (GEO/ADD/3/82/39).

In the closing subscription formulae, the Prince refers to himself with a variety of modifiers and nouns, often involving the possessive determiner “your” (67), adjectives and adverbs like “sincere(ly)” (33) and “affectionate” (42), and head nouns like “friend” (25) and “brother” (29). In one of the earlier letters, he once refers to himself as “your ever affectionate, and attached Friend, as well as I hope hereafter future. Husband” (GEO/ADD/3/82/5). In addition, the Prince frequently uses French phrases (see also Section 5.1.1 on English–French code-switching), the majority of which are “*toujours de même*” (54) –which he often uses in his postscripts– as well as phrases parallel to his English expressions, e.g., “*Vôtre tres affectionné Ami & Frère*” (GEO/ADD/3/82/42). In addition to this self-reference vocabulary, the Prince occasionally adds wording to the effect of “unto my life’s end” (GEO/ADD/3/82/19) and “*jusqu’à la mort*” (GEO/ADD/3/82/30).

In his signatures, the Prince uses the abbreviation “G. P.” for “George Princeps” in the first five letters to Hamilton, after which he exclusively uses his nickname “Palemon” (63). As for his self-reference expressions in the main body of text, the Prince uses similar vocabulary to that in his closing formulae, including “(your) friend” and “(your) brother” (with the above-mentioned modifiers), and “Palemon” on one occasion (GEO/ADD/3/82/24). He also describes himself as “a pretty apt scholar” (GEO/ADD/3/82/26) and compares himself to “the gay gallant Lothario” (GEO/ADD/3/82/78).

### 5.2.2. *Correspondence between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning*

Mary Hamilton refers to herself 57 times in her correspondence to Charlotte Gunning, including 4 instances of a signature which has either been deleted (2) or overwritten (2) at a later point in time. Of these 57 self-reference expressions, 18 occur in the closing formulae, 32 are in the signature, and 7 occur in the main body of text.

Hamilton usually starts her closing formulae with “ever,” followed by “your friend” or the subscription formula “yours,” as well as minor variants thereof like “ever tenderly yours” (HAM/1/15/2/21) or “ever most affectionately your friend” (HAM/1/15/2/31(24)). She also uses French on two occasions: “*toujours de même*” (HAM/1/15/2/25) and “*ton chere Amie*” (HAM/1/15/2/31(30)). In the main body of text, Hamilton refers to herself as “(your) Miranda” (3), “your friend” (3), and once as “any thing so stupid & sober as myself,” (HAM/1/15/2/31(12)). Finally, when Hamilton signs her correspondence to Gunning, she uses either her nickname “Miranda” (8) or “Mary Hamilton” (24).<sup>11</sup>

Charlotte Gunning refers to herself in 41 items, 35 of which occur in the closing formulae, e.g., “tenderly yours,” 38 in the signature, and 2 in the main body of text: “one you have long loved, and who loves you much, and sincerely” (HAM/1/15/1/16) and “an excellent correspondent,” (HAM/1/15/1/24). Gunning most often uses a variant of “ever affectionate & sincerely yours” in the closing formulae.<sup>12</sup> The first surviving letter by Gunning contains the only example of French in this part of the letter, “*toujours de même*” (HAM/1/15/1/2, 7 July 1783). Subsequent items (until May 1785) concern smaller notes and include shortened self-references here –almost certainly due to a lack of space– such as “yours &c &c” (HAM/1/15/1/1(4)) or simply “yours” (HAM/1/15/1/4(3)). Gunning appears to use slightly longer closing formulae towards the end of her correspondence with Hamilton, especially in 1788 and 1789, e.g., “most affectionately & sincerely yours” (HAM/1/15/1/31). In her signature she always refers to herself as “CMG” or “CMGunning,” except in her last two letters, wherein she refers to herself as “CMD” or “CMDigby,” as by this point she had married Stephen Digby (1742–1800). Gunning never refers to herself by her nickname “Astrea.”

## 6. DISCUSSION

From the overview presented in Section 5, it becomes clear that each correspondent in the two sets under scrutiny applies their own practices and strategies in using expressions of both direct address and self-reference.

Regarding strategies of direct address, George, Prince of Wales uses these the most, followed by Charlotte Gunning, then Mary Hamilton to Gunning, and finally Hamilton to the Prince (Table 3). When considered in light of lexical choices (Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2), as well as what we know of their interpersonal relationships (Section 3), we can postulate that the relatively high frequency of the Prince’s use of direct address towards Hamilton reflects his obsession with her. His earlier use of “Miss Hamilton” as opposed to his later use of the nickname “Miranda”, as well as “sister”, “friend”, and “Angel,” indicates that over time the Prince adopted more intimate and familiar terminology to address her (cf. Baker, 1980; Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming b), which he perhaps assumed would help him to win her affections. The strategy of using multiple head nouns (e.g., “My dearest, dearest, dearest Sister, Friend, Miranda”) could be a reflection of the Prince’s attempt at trying not only to convey more intimacy and confidence, but also to appease Hamilton by copying some of her own self-referential and more neutral terminology, in particular “friend” and “sister.” Furthermore, he frequently adds (multiple) intensifiers of endearment such as “dearest” and “loveliest” to these nouns (see Section 5.1.1). As Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995: 561) point out, the diachronic trend is towards simplification of address forms, giving way to “unintensified single-adjective phrases and forms with no modification at all.” However, they

also state that the earlier, more complex system “could accommodate both positive and negative strategies simultaneously” (1995: 561). In the case of the Prince, it seems that he took full advantage of this by frequently including multiple modifiers and head nouns of varying levels of politeness to address Hamilton (see Section 5.2.1 for examples).

Hamilton, on the other hand, includes the pre-modifier “dear” when addressing the Prince on just two occasions, both with the head noun “friend”. By using head nouns such as “friend” and “brother,” she seems to consciously reach a compromise: on the one hand, these expressions are less formal than the honorific term “Sir” –which she uses only three times in her earlier writings to the Prince– and on the other, she avoids intensifiers as well as informal vocabulary like his nickname “Palemon,” which the Prince frequently uses to describe himself. Furthermore, she never includes terms of endearment as head nouns to address the Prince (e.g., “my dear”), and resorts largely to “my friend.” On the use of the possessive determiner “my,” Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 170) observes that it was “often added to the forms of address” and seemed to respond to the author’s intention to “intensify the intimacy and affection prevailing between the correspondents.” However, Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 170) also points out that the use of the possessive “may simply delimit the reciprocal relationship described to two persons, the sender and the recipient”. In the correspondence between Hamilton and the Prince, the use of “my” seems to concern the latter rather than the former, at least on Hamilton’s side. The more neutral use of “my” was likely perceived to be less of an intensifier of intimacy than most terms of endearment (cf. Baker, 1980; see also Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming b), and as such Hamilton’s strategy of direct address was to use the simple pre-modifier “my.” These practices reflect how she negotiated her relationship with the Prince as an inferior-to-superior correspondent in terms of both power and status, in which using nicknames or terms of endearment would have been considered inappropriate (see also Nevala, 2004: 248–253, who discusses social status and distance with regard to address forms in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters). It also reflects Hamilton’s attempts to decline the Prince’s romantic advances by assuming the role of a sister and friend, as well as “a counsellor for his good behaviour, manners, and how to dress for social activities at Court” (Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming b: Section 5.3).

Regarding Hamilton’s lack of signatures in her correspondence to the Prince, this could be the result of the surviving material being drafts and/or copies (Oudesluijs, forthcoming). However, given that some of the copies of her writings to Gunning do contain a signature,<sup>13</sup> it can be argued that the absence of this type of self-reference expression is more likely to reflect a conscious effort on Hamilton’s part to conceal her identity in case anyone else should read the correspondence. As discussed by Oudesluijs (forthcoming), Hamilton was acutely aware that others might read her letters in the future, and hence that there was an inherent danger in revealing sensitive and/or personal information. As such, by never disclosing her identity in her letters and notes to the Prince (at least not explicitly),<sup>14</sup>

she appears to have been anticipating potential problems, which –given the nature of the correspondence– was certainly a possibility.

As regards the correspondence between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Gunning, the relative frequency of expressions of direct address and self-reference is more balanced compared to the writings between Hamilton and the Prince, which reflects both the women's equal status as young unmarried women working at Court and their friendship. Hamilton uses more expressions of direct address with Gunning than in her letters and notes to the Prince, while Gunning uses fewer expressions of direct address with Hamilton compared to the Prince (Table 3). There are, however, still notable discrepancies; for instance, Gunning addresses Hamilton more than *vice versa*, and she also uses more self-reference expressions, both in the subscription formulae and through her signature (Table 4). On the one hand, this might be indicative of a practice by Hamilton to simply use few expressions of direct address and self-reference in general, or it could be the case that there was a minor difference in power and/or social distance between the two women, be it experienced consciously or unconsciously (cf. Nevala, 2004: 66–67). Even though Hamilton and Gunning had much in common, Gunning may have felt less secure in their relationship; by the time their correspondence started, Hamilton was 23 and had worked at Court for two years, whereas Gunning was 20 and only just beginning her employment. Gunning's need to construct her identity and negotiate her relationship with Hamilton might explain her use of more direct address and self-reference expressions in her own letters.

Hamilton uses relatively neutral yet informal terms like “friend” as well as terms of endearment such as “beloved,” “dearest,” and “love.” The use of nicknames reveals an opposite pattern compared to Hamilton's correspondence with the Prince: Hamilton uses “Astrea” to address Gunning on multiple occasions during their time at Court (she never uses “Palemon” with the Prince), and Gunning never refers to herself by her own nickname (whereas the Prince often does). Moreover, Gunning only addresses Hamilton with “Miranda” once, at the beginning of their correspondence, whereas Hamilton refers to herself by her nickname on many occasions. Regarding Gunning's vocabulary, it is interesting to observe less variety in her lexical choices compared to Hamilton's across all structural parts of the correspondence. The level of (in)formality is, however, similar in that Gunning resorts to terms of endearment, such as “dearest,” and also to the more neutral “friend.” This difference in lexical variation is less salient regarding the use of French expressions, found twice with Hamilton and only once with Gunning. This pattern stands in contrast to Hamilton's correspondence with the Prince, who uses French on multiple occasions in most of his letters, whereas Hamilton does so in only two. This might simply reflect the correspondents' different levels of French, but could also be related to the Prince's use of a more complex system of address.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study has been conducted as part of the project *Unlocking the Mary Hamilton Papers* and focusses on the use of expressions of direct address and self-reference in selected writings by and to Mary Hamilton, more specifically her correspondence with George, Prince of Wales (April–December 1779) and Charlotte Margaret Gunning (1779–1790). Framed within the fields of historical sociopragmatics and third-wave historical sociolinguistics, we have explored the practices and strategies that Mary Hamilton and her two correspondents used in order to construct their identities and negotiate their mutual relationships by means of expressions of direct address and self-reference. As suggested by Hernández-Campoy and Conde-Silvestre (2015: 20), letters are a useful resource for the analysis of “the motivation(s) for variability in individuals and their stylistic choices for the construction of identity” (see also Palander-Collin *et al.*, 2013). By building on previous work on address formulae as well as by taking a broad approach in terms of letter structure –one which considers both the author’s and the recipient’s writing and which scrutinises both addressee-oriented and author-oriented forms of address– we have shed more light on the use of forms of address in Late Modern English private correspondence, illustrating how such formulae were used to construct specific identities and negotiate relationships in two correspondence sets. When combined with the socio-historical backgrounds of the participants involved, an inclusive approach like this is a key element in sociopragmatic analyses (cf. Fitzmaurice, 2008) – especially in the context of address forms as indexical of politeness– and in this paper we have demonstrated that it is a fruitful means of further exploring Late Modern English correspondence. Within the context of the project, our aim is to continue studying address forms and politeness strategies in *The Mary Hamilton Papers*, both by Mary Hamilton herself (cf. Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming a, forthcoming b; Yáñez-Bouza & Oudesluijs, forthcoming) as well as by her various correspondents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Unlocking the Mary Hamilton Papers* is a research project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AH/S007121/1) and is based at the University of Manchester in collaboration with University of Vigo and the University of York ([www.maryhamiltonpapers.alc.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.maryhamiltonpapers.alc.manchester.ac.uk)).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Since the edition is based on Mary Hamilton's personal archive, it chiefly comprises in-letters rather than out-letters, and as such Hamilton's own correspondence makes up a relatively small percentage of the whole collection.

<sup>2</sup>Such a scope has previously been adopted in studies exploring Early Modern English correspondence among kin and non-kin letter-writers (e.g., Nevala 2004: 128–158), as well as Late Modern English letter collections of individual authors such as John Gay, Robert Lowth, and Jane Austen (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1999; 2011: 153–163; 2014: 64–74). A comparison of the findings in *The Mary Hamilton Papers* with these studies is beyond the goal of this paper, but see Yáñez-Bouza (forthcoming a, forthcoming b).

<sup>3</sup>Illustrative examples in this paper have been normalised as far as spelling, capitalisation, and abbreviations are concerned. The edition of *The Mary Hamilton Papers* preserves these features in diplomatic transcriptions.

<sup>4</sup>On the relationship between Mary Hamilton and George, Prince of Wales, see Coulombeau (2021).

<sup>5</sup>As becomes clear from Figure 2, Hamilton's letters to Gunning from 1785 onwards (the year Hamilton married John Dickenson) are not accounted for. Through Gunning's correspondence we know that Hamilton continued to write to Gunning, yet the location of Hamilton's side of the correspondence is currently unknown, if indeed the letters have survived at all.

<sup>6</sup>Postscripts by the Prince usually concern one or two lines after the closing salutation. In total, 47 of the 78 items in the Prince's correspondence contain one or more postscripts.

<sup>7</sup>The one item that does not contain an opening expression of direct address starting with "My..." (HAM/1/15/2/20(1)) may have had one originally, but the top corner of the page has been cut off, preventing us from reading what may once have been written there.

<sup>8</sup>The total number of head nouns is 42 rather than 43 since one instance of the opening formula has been excluded due to poor legibility, with the top of the page having been cut off (HAM/1/15/2/9).

<sup>9</sup>Two instances of "Astrea" occur in undated items: HAM/1/15/2/28(3) and HAM/1/15/2/29(1).

<sup>10</sup>Based on the close reading of the correspondence under scrutiny, the expression "toujours de même"/"toujours la même" is here interpreted as a self-reference in which the closing formula is elliptical. For example: "I have written nothing, but your Messenger insists upon my writing I am well -- & toujours de Même Adieu" (Hamilton to the Prince, GEO/ADD/3/83/29), or "Votre Palemon toujours de même" (the Prince signing a letter to Hamilton, GEO/ADD/3/82/28).

<sup>11</sup>Of the eight instances of "Miranda," one has been deleted and two have been overwritten (it is currently unclear by whom) with "Mary Hamilton" at a later point in time. One instance of "Mary Hamilton" was also deleted at a later stage.

<sup>12</sup>For example, "ever your affectionate" (HAM/1/15/1/28(1)) and "most affectionately yours" (HAM/1/15/1/25).

<sup>13</sup>For example, the volume HAM/1/15/2/31 contains many copies of letters from Mary Hamilton to Charlotte Gunning with the signature "Mary Hamilton."

<sup>14</sup>In her writings to the Prince Hamilton refers to herself as "Miranda" only once, in the main body of the text and without any other self-reference (e.g., the personal pronoun "me"): "You are the only person in the world that [really] cares for poor *Miranda*" (GEO/ADD/3/83/23). In the same letter, a reference to Hamilton's uncle Frederick appears as "my —," which also would have concealed her identity.

## REFERENCES

- Anonymous. (1756). *The Complete Letter-Writer: or, New and Polite English Secretary*. (2nd ed.). London.
- Baker, F. (1980). *The works of John Wesley, Vol. 25: Letters, I: 1721–1739*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bijkerk, A. (2004). *Yours sincerely and Yours affectionately*: On the origin and development of two positive politeness markers. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 5(2), 297–311.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Conde-Silvestre, J. C. (2016). A ‘third-wave’ historical sociolinguistic approach to late Middle English correspondence: Evidence from the Stonor Letters. In C. Russi (Ed.), *Current Trends in Historical Sociolinguistics* (pp. 46–66). Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Poland.
- Coulombeau, S. (2021). This is not a love story. *History Today*, 71(10), 64–75.
- Crawley, L. (2014). A life recovered: Mary Hamilton 1756–1816. *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 90(2), 27–46.
- Culpeper, J. (2010). Historical sociopragmatics. In A. Jucker & I. Taavitsainen (Eds.), *Historical Pragmatics* (pp. 69–94). Berlin/New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Culpeper, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Historical Sociopragmatics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Denison, D., Yáñez-Bouza, N., & Oudesluijs, T. (Forthcoming). Editing *The Mary Hamilton Papers (c.1740 – c.1850)*. In J. Calle-Martín & J. Romero-Barranco (Eds.), *Corpora and Language Change in Late Modern English*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Drummond, R. & Schlee, E. (2016). Identity in variationist sociolinguistics. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (pp. 50–65). London: Routledge.
- Fens-de Zeeuw, L. (2009). Plain speech in Lindley Murray’s letters: peculiar or polite? In I. Tiekens-Boon van Ostade & W. Van der Wurff (Eds.), *Current Issues in Late Modern English* (pp. 391–408). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Fisher, G. (1735). *The Instructor: or, Young Man’s Best Companion*. London.
- Fitzmaurice, S. (2008). Epistolary identity: Convention and idiosyncrasy in Late Modern English Letters. In M. Dossena & I. Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (Eds.), *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence: Methodology and Data* (pp. 77–112). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Hannah, L. (2016). *Women of Letters: Gender, Writing and the Life of the Mind in Early Modern England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hernández-Campoy, J. M. & Conde-Silvestre, J. C. (2015). Assessing variability and change in early English letters. In A. Auer, D. Schreier, & R. J. Watts (Eds.), *Letter Writing and Language Change* (pp. 14–34). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heurist. <https://heuristnetwork.org/> (last accessed 05/01/2023).
- Holmes, J. & Schnurr, S. (2005). Politeness, humor and gender in the workplace: Negotiating norms and identifying contestation. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(1), 121–149.
- Jucker, A. H. (2020). *Politeness in the History of English. From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Klein, L. (1995). Politeness for plebes: Consumption and social identity in early eighteenth-century England. In A. Bermingham & J. Brewer (Eds.), *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (pp. 362–382). New York: Routledge.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G. (2014). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Navest, K. (2004). A painter's will to please: Reynolds' use of *yours affectionately/yours sincerely*. *Historical Sociolinguistics and Sociohistorical Linguistics*, 4, [http://www.hum2.leidenuniv.nl/hsl\\_shl/reynolds%20letters.htm](http://www.hum2.leidenuniv.nl/hsl_shl/reynolds%20letters.htm).
- Nevala, M. (2004). *Address in Early English Correspondence: Its Forms and Socio-pragmatic Functions*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- Nevala, M. (2009). Altering distance and defining authority: Person reference in Late Modern English. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 10(2), 238–259.
- Nevalainen, T. & Raumolin-Brunberg, H. (1995). Constraints on politeness. The pragmatics of address formulae in Early English correspondence. In A. H. Jucker (Ed.), *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English* (pp. 541–602). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Nurmi, A. & Pahta, P. (2012). Multilingual practices in women's English correspondence 1400–1800. In M. Sebba, S. Mahootian & C. Jonsson (Eds.), *Language Mixing and Code-Switching in Writing Approaches to Mixed-Language Written Discourse* (pp. 44–67). New York/London: Routledge.
- Oudesluijs, T. (Forthcoming). “No criticism or remarks & pray burn it as fast as you read it”. Exploring copying practices in Mary Hamilton's private correspondence. In L. Caon, M. Gordon & T. Porck (Eds.), *Unlocking the History of English. Pragmatics, Prescriptivism and Text Types. Proceedings of ICEHL-21, 7–11 June 2021, Leiden*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Pahta, P. & Nurmi, A. (2007). What we do *cón amore*: Structures of code-switching in eighteenth-century letters. In J. Pérez-Guerra, D. González-Álvarez, J. L. Bueno-Alonso & E. Rama-Martínez (Eds.), *'Of varying language and opposing creed': New Insights into Late Modern English* (pp. 401–420). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Pahta, P., Nevala, M., Nurmi, A., & Palander-Collin, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Social Roles and Language Practices in Late Modern English*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Palander-Collin, M. (2011). Variation and change in patterns of self-reference in early English correspondence. In J. Culpeper (Ed.), *Historical Sociopragmatics* (pp. 83–108). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Palander-Collin, M., Nevala, M., & Sairio, A. (2013). Language and identity in letters. In J. Tyrkkö, O. Timofeeva, & M. Salenius (Eds.), *Ex Philologia Lux: Essays in Honour of Leena Kahlas-Tarkka* (pp. 291–311). Helsinki: Modern Language Society.
- Raumolin-Brunberg, H. (1996). Forms of address in early English correspondence. In T. Nevalainen & H. Raumolin-Brunberg (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language History: Studies based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (pp. 167–181). Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Smittberg, E. (2021). *Syntactic Change in Late Modern English: Studies on Colloquialization and Densification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- The Mary Hamilton Papers (c.1750–c.1850)*. Compiled by David Denison, Nuria Yáñez-Bouza, Tino Oudesluijs, Cassandra Ulph, Christine Wallis, Hannah Barker and Sophie Coulombeau, University of Manchester. In progress, 2019–, <https://doi.org/10.48420/21687809>.
- Tieken-Boon van Ostade, I. (1999). Of formulas and friends: expressions of politeness in John Gay's letters. In G. A. J. Tops, B. Devriendt & S. Geukens (Eds.), *Thinking English Grammar. To Honour Xavier Dekeyser, Professor Emeritus* (pp. 99–112). Louvain: Peeters.
- Tieken-Boon van Ostade, I. (2011). *The Bishop's Grammar. Robert Lowth and the Rise of Prescriptivism in English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tieken-Boon van Ostade, I. (2014). *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of the Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Watts, R. J. (2015). Setting the scene: Letters, standards and historical sociolinguistics. In A. Auer, D. Schreier, & R. J. Watts (Eds.), *Letter Writing and Language Change* (pp. 1–13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Włodarczyk, M. & I. Taavitsainen. (2017). Historical (socio)pragmatics at present. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 18(2), Special issue.
- Yáñez-Bouza, N. (Forthcoming a). 'By Miranda, Mary Hamilton, Mrs Dickenson' – Self-reference in Late Modern English private correspondence. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*.
- Yáñez-Bouza, N. (Forthcoming b). 'My dearest Clara ... my dear friend' – Personal Names and direct address in Mary Hamilton's private correspondence. *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*.
- Yáñez-Bouza, N. & T. Oudesluijs. (Forthcoming). 'My dearest friend, Ever Yours, Mary Hamilton': Exploring forms of address in the late Georgian period. In J. Calle-Martín & J. Romero Barranco (Eds.), *Corpora and Language Change in Late Modern English*. Bern: Peter Lang.