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Eighteenth-Century Ego Documents: The Individual in Society

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Convenors

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Titlepage disclaimer:

English manuscripts: Excerpt of Lady Mary Hamilton's diary; reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, the John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

German manuscripts: Letter written by Dorothea Hess to Susanna Escher, 1762; Facsimile, Signatur Handschriftenabteilung ZB Zürich: FA Escher vG 146.127.

General description

Ego documents are texts that belong to the same communicative genre (letters, diaries, travel accounts, personal chronicles and other autobiographical texts). The common denominator of these is that their authors use them to write about their lives and for self-reflection. Historical studies have always relied on ego documents as additional sources of information supporting a history-writing concerned with politics and facts. Particularly the last decade has seen a change in perspective in that ego documents are now also consulted to examine the socio-cultural dimension of history (von Greyerz 2007, Ulbrich 2015, Steuwer & Graf 2015). In literary studies, critical letter and diary editions of well-known authors (e.g. Samuel Pepys, Elizabeth Gaskell; Bettina von Arnim, Theodor Fontane) have been used to gain insights into the authors' lives and the socio-historical contexts surrounding the composition of literary texts. In linguistics, research so far has largely concentrated on letters, a fruitful source for the investigation of language change (e.g. Bergs 2005 or Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003) or historical pragmatics (e.g. Linke 2000, Schröter 2016).

What emerges from this brief overview is that the potential of ego documents has not yet been fully explored: individual disciplines tend to privilege certain kinds of ego documents over others. Moreover, time is ripe for cross-fertilisation of the different methodological approaches that individual disciplines use in their study of ego documents. By joining forces in addressing research questions relevant to all disciplines the symposium will provide new perspectives. It will bring together scholars from linguistics, literary, historical and educational studies who work on English and German ego documents.

The focus lies on the eighteenth century, where especially the second half of that century saw a fundamental socio-cultural shift in the Western world from a society dominated by the upper classes towards a society in which the middle classes rise in importance, a change influenced by values and norms of the Enlightenment. The participants analyse ego documents with a view to understanding and reconstructing this shift, and the concomitant changing perception of the individual in society. Other papers will complement this strand by considering the question of how friendships and social networks are performed/represented in ego documents. Another concern of the symposium will be different levels and types of education, particularly the question in how far society had an influence on an individual's education. By bringing together scholars from linguistic, literary, historical and educational studies to discuss and exchange views on these issues, the symposium will lead to a deeper understanding of the richness of data obtainable from ego documents and how methodological diversity can be pooled and enhanced through interdisciplinary collaboration.

Abstracts

Negotiating Social Independence and Court Servitude: Lady Mary Hamilton's Position as Sub-Governess in Queen Charlotte's Court

Louise Penner, *University of Massachusetts Boston*

The archive of Mary Hamilton Papers, held at the University of Manchester's Rylands Library, provides new insight into the unique social position of a young unmarried woman of privilege. This paper explores how the letters written to Hamilton capture the minute details of a young woman's efforts to structure the relationships of her post-adolescent/pre-marriage years. These years would seem to be ones of freedom and independence for Hamilton, who sought out friendships with older women, who encouraged her in her writing. These women included a neighbor of a much lower social standing to Hamilton, who would much later become Hamilton's mother-in-law. Eventually, however, Hamilton had to face the demanding work responsibilities required of her when she received the honor of being asked to serve in the Royal Court as sub-governess to Queen Charlotte's children. The Hamilton archive allows us to trace both the social conflicts created by her position of servitude and the strategies Hamilton employed to resolve those conflicts. Drawing on recent work on biographical narrative by Michie & Warhol (2015), as well as sociological network theory by Levine (2015), this paper argues that the letters show us how Hamilton relied on networks of women to define, manage, learn from, and ultimately move beyond her complex and shifting social position.

The Hamilton archive thus allows us to glimpse the life of a talented woman writer, who struggled to develop her craft while serving as governess to at least two of the Queen's fifteen children. She befriended the Queen, who envied Hamilton's writing skills, but later lost the queen's favor. It's unclear whether she lost Charlotte's favor *before* she left the court, *because* she left the court, or if her leaving was the cause of the queen's displeasure. What we do know is that after leaving she lived among the *bas bleu*, with members of which group she corresponded and exchanged other writings. Soon after, she married – happily and with great intimacy, humor, and mutual confidence – and lived what seems to have been a culturally and emotionally rich life, far different to the governesses life she lived while serving the Queen. The correspondence related to governessing includes letters between Hamilton and the Queen's daughters, Sophie, Augusta, and Charlotte, as well as between Hamilton and the Queen. This paper focuses primarily on letters between Hamilton and other governesses at Court, as well as those between Hamilton and her future mother-in-law. While addressing interpersonal contacts, to be sure, the letters also suggest that these women forged cross-class alliances in order to support and entertain each other, in part through sharing tough stories of the real dangers and emotional deprivations of their lives and work.

Negotiating Intellectual Mentorship and Domestic Boredom: Lady Mary Hamilton's Position as Woman's Companion at Bulstrode Hall

Cheryl Nixon, University of Massachusetts Boston

Continuing to examine the Mary Hamilton Papers, this paper uses the private diaries written by Hamilton to emphasize the tension between Hamilton's positions of social freedom and social servitude. Hamilton's diaries, dating from 1782-1785, document three years of independent living marked by intellectual stimulation and social circulation. Most famously, she intermingled with the *bas bleu*, participating in meetings and parties held by Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Vesey. As part of this remarkably rich social life, she repeatedly visited Mrs. Mary Delany (the artist known for her paper-cutting) and the Duchess of Portland (the wealthy art and natural history collector) at Portland's famous Bulstrode Hall. Hamilton was deeply gratified to be welcomed into the home of two of the most important intellectuals—and unique female characters—of her time. This paper demonstrates that Hamilton's female network crossed generational lines, allowing the aged Delaney (in her 80s) and Portland (in her 70s) to provide a powerful form of female mentoring to Hamilton. The relationship with Delaney and Portland offered Hamilton a multifaceted definition of the intellectual, artistic female; her time at Bulstrode focused on quiet activities that linked intellectual and domestic life, providing a counterpoint to Hamilton's many social outings, visits, and parties.

Hamilton's diary presents a unique redefinition of the eighteenth-century "household" (as researched and theorized by historians such as Tadmor (2001)); her time at Bulstrode creates an all-female, multigenerational, intellectual home. At the same time that it is defined by meaningful mental growth, it is a household structured by domestic rituals that often seem to undermine the intellectual stimulation provided by Delaney and Portland. This paper focuses on the work-like quality of the time Hamilton spent at Bulstrode and the decorous subservience she shows the women: she read letters aloud to the women, accompanied them at meals, helped them with handicrafts, and engaged them in conversation obviously meant to entertain them and distract them from health problems. Most interestingly, Hamilton is given scribal tasks that seem to be both intellectual and secretarial in nature: she pastes prints into Delaney's book of prints, she copies letters from Mrs. Delany to her sister in a volume, and writes a catalog of the books, objects, and paintings held at Bulstrode (these last two volumes are part of the archive). This paper emphasizes Hamilton's careful negotiation of an intellectual relationship that encourages mental stimulation and confers status on her, but that also features isolation, boredom, and repetition, and that places her in a position similar to that of a gentlewoman's companion.

That *idle chit chat*? How Conversing Creates Female Friendship: Evidence from Eighteenth-Century Diaries and Letters

Anne-Christine Gardner & Marianne Hundt, *University of Zurich*

As Fitzmaurice (2012) has shown, letters can be seen as places in which conversations are conducted and friendship is performed. This paper looks at how friendship is performed (and occasionally explicitly defined) in the correspondence and reflected on in the diaries of Lady Mary Hamilton. A focus will be placed on female friendship, contrasting it with a comment from William Napier, who refers to female correspondence as 'idle chit chat'. The paper looks into different friendships between (female) friends of Mary Hamilton's, considering different degrees of closeness and how they emerge from an analysis of the diaries and letters. One case study is concerned with the friendship between Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Margaret Gunning. This seems to have been very close, as is evidenced, among other things, by their use of code names for each other and people in their circle(s). Further points of interest are Mary Hamilton's friendships with Horace Walpole, as well as Frances Burney and other members of the Bluestocking network. The analysis pays particular attention to change in terms of address, to the role that conversation plays in the development of friendship, and to meta-comments and negotiations of friendship.

Education and Socialisation in Frances Burney's Court Journals

Lorna Clark, *Carleton University*

All of Burney's novels focus on a heroine coming out onto the stage of the world; emerging from the cocooned world of childhood, she enters a field of wider action, relatively unprotected. In the course of the novel, she learns to adapt to the demands of society and to negotiate the path to adulthood. After running the gauntlet of errors, she learns from her mistakes and wins acceptance in society, symbolised by the concluding marriage and the new family that crystallises around her at the end.

Approached in terms of her development as a woman and as a writer, the five years spent by Burney in the royal household enact a similar trajectory as a testing period. During these years, she made a painful transition (similar to that of her heroines) in weaning herself from her primary ties and forging a new identity of her own. When she emerges at the end of five years, she has been changed both as a woman and as a writer, able to render the depths of suffering in a series of tragedies and in a rich and complex novel, *Camilla*.

Burney's years at court involve a series of trying events: the death of Mary Delany, the madness of the King, and a disappointing love affair, each of which evokes a sense of rupture and loss. Faced with the uncomfortable sense of her own insignificance and limitations, Burney offsets the realisation by writing her own narrative in which she can figure at centre-stage. The structure of the narratives created in the *Court Journals* parallels the action of her novels, and the lessons learned by her heroines have their analogue in her private writings. Burney's years at Court function as an apprenticeship at the great 'school of the world' from which she emerges a changed person, ready to enter into the most creative period of her writing life.

Life and Death in the Correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800)

Elizabeth Eger, *King's College London*

The paper will explore the relationship of the individual to society in the life and letters of Elizabeth Montagu, whose biography I am writing. It will focus on the relationship between the living and the dead in the eighteenth-century literary and moral imagination. Montagu was highly self-conscious about the role of literature in bridging the distance between the living and the dead, and she articulates this both in the formal literary genre of her *Dialogues of the Dead* and in the pages of her more intimate correspondence. She was an admirer of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he described the role of sympathy and imagination in structuring social behaviour, and revealed the integral relationship between care for the self and others. He remarked upon the problem of sympathy's limits, particularly in relation to the dead: "And from thence arises one of the most important principles in human nature, the dread of death, the great poison to the happiness, but the great restraint upon the injustice of mankind, which, while it afflicts and mortifies the individual, guards and protects the society." Through Montagu's work, and through my experience of the biographer's task in bringing her subject (back) to life, the paper will explore the paradoxical power of the fear of death as a driving force in the pursuit of social and moral value.

Grey Goose Quills and Scripts of Self-discipline: The Linguistic Biography of Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800)

Anni Sairio, *University of Helsinki*

The paper discusses Elizabeth Montagu's linguistic biography, a script- and print-based investigation of an eighteenth-century idiolect based on personal correspondence and published writing (see Johnstone 2009, Evans 2013, Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2014; Merrill & West 2009). The main set of material for this work is the Bluestocking Corpus, a collection of edited manuscript letters which spans from the 1730s to the 1780s and includes sociolinguistic metadata of the correspondents.

Bluestocking women strove to maintain self-mastery in their lives, an ideal reflecting politeness, virtue and accomplishments in the eighteenth century (Backscheider 2013; see also Eger 2010). In linguistic terms, how does this self-mastery appear in Elizabeth Montagu's letters? As a case study of the biography the paper presents a linguistic model of self-discipline which draws from modality and relevant lexical fields, as in *I must submit* or *to have strength of mind*. The paper examines Montagu's linguistic construction of events which are emotionally loaded: deaths in the social circle, and publishing ventures where she subjected herself to evaluation.

The Effect of Variation in Education on Letter Writing Practices

Anita Auer, *University of Lausanne*

Over the last decade, the Late Modern English period, and in particular the eighteenth century, have received a fair amount of attention (cf. for instance Görlach 2001; Tieken-Boon van Ostade ed. 2008; Dossena & Tieken-Boon van Ostade ed. 2008; Pahta, Nevala & Nurmi eds. 2010; Hickey 2010; Hundt 2014). Within the field of historical sociolinguistics, its language history was approached from two different perspectives, notably “from above” and “from below” the social spectrum (see Elspass 2007; Auer et al. 2015), which, respectively, concerns (a) the language use and codification practices of the educated elite, and (b) the language use of the lower social layers, and majority, of the society.

This paper will be concerned with all layers of eighteenth-century society and the varying education opportunities that people from different social strata had access to. A close look at education and literacy levels (based on secondary literature and selected qualitative case studies), notably at a time when compulsory elementary schooling had not yet been introduced, will allow us to shed some light on the difference in letter writing practices across the social spectrum.

Polymorphous Uniformity: Packaging Identity in Eighteenth-Century England

Amanda Vickery, *Queen Mary University of London*

The eighteenth century saw the commercial flowering of a hybrid form of ego-document which built on both the accounting tradition of capturing life in numbers and the spiritual task of remembering in words – the pocket sized diary, or memorandum book. These were printed by canny publishers and stationers, mostly in London and had a set basic form. They were small and handy, with a choice illustration on the frontispiece and miscellany of printed information at the front. Then the rest was laid out for daily entries, and often a facing page of sundry accounts. Keeping this sort of pocket diary was a common training for polite little girls.

However the basic structure could be tailored to fit an array of customers: the school boy, the young man, the gentleman, the Methodist, the polite lady, the housekeeper, the trader could all be accommodated with some tweaking of the front matter. The *Christian Gentleman & Preacher’s Diary* 1807, has a cheering motto for each day: March 30: ‘all unrighteousness is sin’, and a stirring picture of a missionary on the frontispiece. Whereas the *Ladies Most Elegant and Convenient Pocket Book* for the year 1776, offered a fashion plate on the frontispiece, and promised a lay-out ‘ruled in a more plain and familiar manner than any yet adapted for the use of the Ladies.’ Yet both books are essentially the same beast. I have yet to go into a record office in England and Wales and not find an example of these pocket memorandum books. Within a fixed lay-out, the literate, but not especially literary, were invited to relate the rhythms of their lives. Everyone’s life a little different, but all packaged in roughly the same way. Pocket diaries construct eighteenth-century lives and selves in polymorphous uniformity.

This paper examines the rise and scope of the pocket diary as a publishing genre, the way the texts structured human diversity and imagined the constituent

members of society while inviting self-reflection within a set format and the varied manner that consumers of the pocket diaries conformed, developed or resisted the scripts with which they were presented.

***Liebste Fründin!* – Friendship as a Relational Concept among Women?**

Angelika Linke, *University of Zurich and University of Linköping*

For a long time the vast body of scholarly literature dealing with the career of the concept of ‘friendship’ during the eighteenth century took this concept to be first and foremost a male one – last but not least for socio-historical reasons. During the 1990s, gender-critical research proved this idea to be wrong (see Heuser 1991). Nevertheless, most of what we know about ‘friendship’ in the eighteenth century – at least with regard to the German speaking world and especially with regard to female friendship – is based on socially marked and quite elitist data: on literary or philosophical works, on letters and diaries of writers, artists and other intellectual contemporaries. This paper aims to broaden this perspective by looking at everyday correspondence between ‘ordinary’ – though educated – women belonging to middle- and upper-middle class families living in the urban context of Zurich and its surroundings. The paper focuses on the question whether and (if so) how they refer to each other and their relation in terms of *Freundin* (friend) or *Freundschaft* (friendship) and how the cognitive as well as emotive and deontic semantics of these terms (Hermanns 1995) can be reconstructed from their usage. Furthermore, by comparing letters from the first half of the eighteenth century with letters from its last decades, the paper hopes to trace semantic and pragmatic changes in the concept of female friendship and its significance for female self-positioning.

“How to be good”: Childhood and Education in Bourgeois Eighteenth-Century Letter Writing

Elise Voerke, *University of Basel*

Much research has been done on the history of childhood since Philippe Ariès published his famous book in 1960. Yet until very recently, the research focus has almost exclusively been on the (pedagogical) discourse on children, childhood and education. Following this discourse, the main aim of education in the age of Enlightenment was to raise productive and “useful” members of society (see for instance the pedagogical writings of Isaak Iselin, an important proponent of the Enlightenment in Switzerland). But how did people prepare their children to live a good life and what was their understanding of education in the daily practice?

In my paper I will trace this practice in letters and diaries of bourgeois Swiss families in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These documents show doubts and challenges that arise with the attempt to be a good parent, as well as self-confident appropriation and criticism of pedagogical theories. The ego-documents also reveal the common practice of placing children elsewhere for their education. In such cases the letters exchanged between parents and their children become decisive tools of education, covering the geographical distance between the family members.

The Educational World: A Child's Point of View

Rebekka Horlacher, *University of Zurich*

The paper reconstructs the educational world from the perspective of a child. The sources are over one hundred letters written by Eduard Lejeune, the son of a medical doctor in Frankfurt, during his three-year stay (1809-1811) in Pestalozzi's famous Institute in Yverdon. The letters provide us with weekly reports about the young student's perception of living and studying in Yverdon, they give an account of his view on his younger brother Gustav, who joined the Institute as well, but also on friends, teachers, classes, illnesses and trips. The paper aims firstly to reconstruct the meaning of education in Pestalozzi's institute through Eduard's eyes and secondly to discuss the differences in how education was propagated by the adults (e.g. Pestalozzi and his team) and how it was perceived by the addressee, Eduard. A third 'voice' that can be added to the reconstruction of what education meant at the time is that of the Lejeune boys' tutor, Elias Mieg, who regularly informed the parents about the progress of their sons.

„Was ich bin, was ich kann, lehrte ich mich selbst“ [‘Who I am, what I know, I taught myself’]

Gudrun Emberger, *Freie Universität Berlin*

The actress Karoline Schulze-Kummerfeld (1742 Wien-1815 Weimar) left two autobiographical manuscripts (*Die ganze Geschichte meines Lebens* and *Caroline Kummerfeldt geborne Schulze. Wahre Geschichte meines theatralschen Lebens*) written at two different phases in her life and for different purposes. Born into a family of actors, Schulze-Kummerfeld never went to school but was educated by her parents. Later in life, she taught herself how to perform on stage and became a professional actor. In 1785, she left the theater for good and started a sewing school for young girls. Based on her memoirs and other ego documents, the paper focuses on the aspect of education in Karoline Schulze-Kummerfeld's life, i.e. not only her own "Bildungsgeschichte" [educational history] but also by reflecting on her own particularly appealing understanding of education when acting as a teacher herself.

Between individual reminiscence and public memory: Pastry baker Georg Anton Oettinger, the Battle of Leipzig, and the reawakening of Germany (1806-1831)

Roberto Zaugg, *Université de Lausanne*

Throughout Europe the Napoleonic Wars fuelled an impressive wave of self-narratives. In this context, an unprecedented number of men (and to a lesser degree women) from the middle and lower classes, who had witnessed the dramatic events of war as militaries or civilians, grabbed a pen and wrote down their memories and reflections. When doing so they often interlaced reminiscences about individual experiences with public memorial discourse. The personal chronicle by Georg Anton Oettinger (1745-after 1831) – which is part of a larger family archive stretching from the 1680s to the Nazi period and containing various self-narratives of male family members – constitutes a highly interesting example of post-Napoleonic autobiographical writing. Written on the blank pages of two almanacs (*Schreibkalender*), the chronicle (1806-1831) of this old Leipzig grocer and pastry baker does not only narrate events the author had personally witnessed during the French occupation of Saxony and the Restoration, it also includes lengthy excerpts from newspapers, satirical poems and political pamphlets. In this sense, it allows us to analyse the entwining of individual experience and discourse spread by print media in the creation of a German national consciousness and memorial culture.

Self-Reflection in the So-Called *Herrnhuter Lebensläufe* [Herrnhuter Biographies] – A Semantic and Syntactic Analysis

Jörg Riecke & Kerstin Vockel, *University of Heidelberg*

This paper deals with the so called ‘Herrnhuter Lebensläufe’, which serve as an extraordinary source for self-reflection in the eighteenth century. For linguists, these texts are of particular interest as they were written by people who are otherwise generally less well represented in linguistic research. The focus of the paper will thus be on specific linguistic phenomena found in these texts, for example: dialogical elements, influence from other languages (particularly from French), semantic peculiarities like the frequent use of vocabulary from the lexical fields of sorrow and happiness, and even the somewhat repetitive, partly formulaic, structures of the sentence. With respect to their pragmatic function, the ‘Herrnhuter Lebensläufe’ can be understood as a warning and reminder for the next generation, seeing as they were read aloud at funerals as a last statement of the dead and therefore considered to be of high educational value.

Ego Vobis: Writing the Occasional Self

Eve T. Bannet, *University of Oklahoma*

Scholars have begun to discredit the idea that the "modern" autonomous, ego-centered self was the only, much less the predominant, idea of subjectivity during the eighteenth century. They show, for instance, that Locke himself presented the contractual, self-identical person as a necessary legal fiction, which contradicted the more fluid and discontinuous identities of subjectivities constructed from memories of past experiences; or that Epicurianism underpinned a porous sense of the self, as always open to sway and declension by the language, emotions and force of others. This paper will ask what idea/s of the self were cultivated by correspondence, in what sense/s a person was thought to "show himself" in his/her letters, and most particularly, how this affects readers of letters – contemporary reader-correspondents and reader-audiences, but also ourselves as reader-scholars of letters. The data will come from fictional representations of the always "occasional" scene of correspondence in works by Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood and Jane Austen.

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