

FROM INSTRUCTION MANUALS TO ENTERTAINING EPISTOLARY NOVELS: LETTERS IN BOTH GENRES FROM THE 17TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of salutations and subscriptions in letters across genres in the Late Modern English period. The paper compares letter-writing manuals addressed to women and three epistolary novels (*Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, *Evelina*, *Lady Susan*) written by women, namely Aphra Behn, Frances Burney and Jane Austen, dating from the end of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The aim is to observe the evolution of the formulae to start and conclude letters along the centuries under analysis in both genres and to establish a comparison between them. The results show that more similarities than differences are found between the two genres, and that changes displayed in the formulae used through history in the manuals seem to be present also in the novels. The conclusion suggests that the novelists must have been familiar with the instruction provided in the manuals but, despite the linguistic similarities observed, the letters in the novels created a narrative that went beyond such instruction.

Keywords: letter salutations, letter subscriptions, letter-writing manuals, epistolary novels, Early Modern English, Late Modern English

1. Introduction

Communication was established by means of correspondence when people were away from each other already in ancient cultures (Palander-Collin, 2010), and in Britain writing letters gained popularity in the Early Modern English period (Cusack, 1998). This custom very gradually extended and in the eighteenth century letter-writing manuals such as *The Art of Letter-Writing* claimed that “Nothing is so

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common as to write Letters ... The Necessities of Life oblige almost all Manner of Persons to have Recourse to an Epistolary Correspondence” (Anon., 1762: 1). This explains the proliferation of letters and of letter-writing manuals. At the beginning of the period, “imported Latin manuals” were the most frequently used ones (Green, 2007: 102), and it was not until the early seventeenth century that the manuals written in English began to appear. These manuals varied in style and they were characterised by different features depending on the audience that they were aimed at. Similarly, they also changed over time, for instance, Green (2007: 115) indicates that “[b]y the Restoration, letter-writing manuals take a mannerist turn”, influenced by styles observed in France at that time, and which had gained popularity thanks to George II’s return to England from exile.

From the end of the eighteenth, and especially during the nineteenth century, the increase in literacy among people in lower ranks of society and the movement of population to the urban areas implied that a higher rate of people wrote letters at that time (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2009). Consequently, the number of letter-writing manuals available also increased. Some of these manuals were re-edited several times along the whole Late Modern English period and although the contents are similar, the variation they display can contribute to an understanding of some of the changes that the language was experiencing at the time.

In addition to being the main means of communication, letters began to be used in other contexts. According to Del LungoCamiciotti (2014: 25), thanks to “the adaptability of the epistolary form ... different written genres” could appear. She adds that it was the motivations that made women write letters that “contributed to the rise of epistolary novels whose heroines were female letter writers” (Del LungoCamiciotti, 2014: 25). Although both types of books contained letters and there seems to be a connection between them (Beebee, 1999), the audience and the objective of each were different.

Despite not being exclusively written by and for women, “novels largely had a female readership” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2009: 8-9). In addition, Epstein (1985: 400) explains that for many women epistolary novels became a way to consolidate themselves as writers, and she adds that “by the end of the seventeenth century letters had become inextricably tied to feminine ways of self-expression and to a social world over which women presided”. This demand explains the focus of the present paper, letter-writing manuals addressed specifically to women and epistolary novels written by female authors. The study is diachronic since it analyses the similarities and differences between these manuals from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but it is also synchronic, as it observes the possible influence that these manuals may have had on the style of the letters in the novels of that time. More specifically, the focus will be on the salutations and subscriptions used in the letters found in both types of texts, the manuals and the novels.

2. Salutations and subscriptions in Modern English letters

Although the salutations and subscriptions analysed in the present study will be described in section 6, a brief explanation of the two terms will be provided here, together with reference to some studies that have dealt with this topic before.

Both the salutation and the subscription are parts of letters and they usually are realised by fixed formulae, which very often depend on the type of letter and the relationship between the writer and the addressee. Whereas the salutation is placed at the beginning of the letter, addressing the recipient, as in *Dear Mr Smith*, the subscription will close the letter before being signed, using structures in present-day English such as *Yours Sincerely*.

Over the years, the formulae used in both types of expressions appear to have changed and these changes are reflected in instruction letter-writing manuals. From a historical point of view, studies have mainly focused on the politeness issues related to the use of the different formulae, considering the concept of face as developed by Brown and Levinson in 1987 (e.g. Dossena & Del Lungo Camiciotti, 2012; Jucker, 1995; Nevalainen & Tanskanen, 2007; Pahta et al., 2010). Polite language was equated to proper language, that is the language that was prescribed in the grammars and that speakers would aspire to use, and the changes that were taking place in society in the Late Modern English period were reflected in the changes that can be found in the manuals of the time (Fens-de-Zeeuw, 2008).

There are several corpus-based studies which have focused on the Early Modern English period and the eighteenth century. As regards salutations, for instance, Nevalianen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995) analysed address terms in different types of letters, dating from the Late Middle English period to the seventeenth century. They conclude that in their period under investigation there “is a process of both social and structural simplification of deferential address terms, and hence decreased negative politeness between distants” (Nevalianen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995: 590). Similarly, Nevala (2007) focuses on address forms but covering the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. She finds that when writing to somebody in a higher position and when writing a formal letter, there is less variation between the two centuries than when letters are exchanged between people of lower ranks. Also, she concludes that it is not clear to what extent letter-writing manuals influenced letter writers, which is in line with other studies that she refers to and which point to the fact that letter writers did not always follow the formulae that appear in the manuals. In this respect, Nurmi and Pahta (2010: 156) find in their data one subscription that was not included in the manuals consulted in this study, this is the French borrowing *adieu* (see section 6), and they conclude that “terms such as *adieu* or *addio* are more tied to the conventions of contemporary polite society”.

Also, regarding subscriptions, a comprehensive analysis of Late Modern English business letters discusses not only the structure of these formulae in British English but in other varieties of English. Dollinger (2008) observes a higher degree of variation in the letters written outside Britain and that the term *servant* is used more frequently in British letters.

3. Letter-writing manuals addressed to women in Modern England

The fact that some letter-writing manuals were specifically addressed only to women supports the idea that women needed this type of texts. Writing letters was not only a leisure activity or a way to keep in contact with friends and family, but it was also a need as letters were written on all occasions. It seems that it was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that female audiences were taken into consideration when writing these manuals. For example, on the front page of the 1652 edition of *The Secretaries Studie* by Samuel Sheppard, the presence of the word *ladies* points to women as being part of the target audience. Other manuals were clearly written with a female audience in mind, as they are directly mentioned in the main title of the book. This is the case of *The Female Secretary*, written in 1671 by Henry Care. In a similar way, other instruction manuals for women contained a section on letters. Two of these are *The Gentlewomans Companion*, attributed to Hannah Woolley and first published in 1673, and *A Supplement to the Queen-like Closet* written by Hannah Woolley in 1674.

The four manuals mentioned above share similarities but they also display differences. Despite being both specifically letter-writing manuals, *The Secretaries Studie*² and *The Female Secretary* would not have provided women at the time with the same information. The reason for this is the way they present the letters and the presence or absence of additional instruction regarding the art of letter writing. *The Secretaries Studie* displays the letters organised in different groups depending on the type or content, that is, there are *amorous letters*, *houshold*³ *letters*, or *requesting letters*, to name a few. However, in *The Female Secretary* the author does not apparently distribute the letters following any specific criteria. Also, whereas Care provides readers with a great deal of instruction in the last pages of *The Female Secretary* regarding different sections of a letter and proper forms of address for people of different rank or the relationship with them, Sheppard only includes the letters in *The Secretaries Studie* without any further indications as to how to write them.

The number of letters in the two books referred to above by Woolley is lower than in the two previous letter-writing manuals. This could be explained by the fact that Woolley's texts also addressed other issues of interest for women at the time. It is precisely due to the broader information covered in these two books that more women may have had access to them. When the sections devoted to letters are analysed in both, it can be observed that in *The Gentlewomans Companion*, a subsection on "some general and choice Rules for writing of Letters" (Woolley, 1673: 218) is included. This contains not only information regarding address terms but also aspects concerning instructions for writing different types of letters depending on their content and subject matter. This subsection precedes the actual letters, which

² All the titles, words and quotations extracted from the manuals are shown in their original spelling form.

³ As these terms in italics are extracted directly from the manuals, the spelling may show deviation from standard spelling, as is the case here.

would probably be the expected order. On the other hand, instruction is not provided in *A Supplement to the Queen-like Closet*, because the author does not feel this is necessary, as she states that she gave this in another book and in this case she thinks “it not amiss to give some Forms or Patterns of Letters for Elder, and more serious people” (Woolley, 1674: 148). A set of letters distributed along approximately forty pages concludes with the following comment: “I have now done with the Letters, having given you the Forms of as many as they teach you all the rest, that possible you may have occasion for” (Woolley, 1674: 182).

Despite the presence of these manuals for women already in the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century continued to be dominated by manuals addressed to men. One of the few manuals for women was *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*, published anonymously in 1763. Not only is this a manual for women, but the letters in it are written also by women, according to the front page of the book. In the preface the author claims that “It has often raised my Wonder, that no Book of this kind has ever been thought of for the Use of the Fair Sex particularly” (Anon., 1763: i). This shows that the author was unaware of the existence of the books that have been described above, which date from the previous century, but it also points to the awareness of the need of this type of texts for women. The manual is divided into several parts, each of which includes different types of letters according to their subject matter, and it also contains an introduction with directions mainly regarding different modes of address .

Some manuals published in the eighteenth century included ladies among their audiences, for example, in *The Art of Letter-Writing*, published in 1762, the anonymous author indicates that the book is intended for young people, but also for *Gentlemen and Ladies*. This manual follows a very similar pattern to that of *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*, both in the organisation of the letters and in the instruction provided at the beginning.

Sometimes instruction towards women’s behaviour was presented in the form of letters. An example of this is *The Polite Lady; or a Course of Female Education*, which was first published in 1760. This book was reprinted on different occasions and even reedited, which indicates its popularity. The letters contained in it cover different aspects of women’s education at the time, and they were aimed at governesses to be used for instruction. This type of text differs from the letter-writing manuals since its aim is not instruction on how to write letters but on behaviour. Despite not containing information on the style of letters, the salutations and the subscriptions present in them can be compared to the ones both in the manuals and in the novels.

In the nineteenth century letter-writing manuals seem to address both ladies and gentlemen. This is clearly stated in the title or subtitle of the book, as in *The Comprehensive Letter Writer: a Universal Guide to Correspondence for Ladies and Gentlemen* (Anon., 1858), or in *The Universal Letter-Writer ... adapted to the Use of Both Sexes* (Cooke, 1822). The latter is in fact a new edition of a manual that appears to have been fairly popular in the previous century as stated by the number of reprints that it had even in the nineteenth century. In the first edition the comment

in relation to the audience was not present. This may suggest an awareness of the need of these types of texts for women as well as for men. Although both nineteenth century manuals contain directions and instructions as to how letters should be written, they present this information in different ways. Whereas *The Comprehensive Letter Writer* includes one section on general information regarding letter writing depending on the type of letter (e.g. juvenile, mercantile or love) and another section on how to address, commence and conclude letters according to the addressees, *The Universal Letter-Writer* does not provide instruction in separate sections but it is included in the body of some letters.

Despite the extended publications of these manuals, it cannot be concluded that they were consulted regularly when writing, and therefore, “it remains difficult to say with any certainty how strongly the prescriptions of these popular books influenced the practice of individual letter writers (Hannan, 2016: 11). However, educated writers of the time would have probably had access to these instruction books either directly or indirectly.

4. Epistolary novels and their connection with letter-writing manuals

The *Oxford English Dictionary* online defines *epistolary*, in its combination with the noun *novel*, as “in the form of letters” (“epistolary, A.2”). This definition is fairly broad and establishing the borderline limiting what epistolary novels are does not seem an easy task. Bannet (2021: xvi) explains that when referring to “narrative-epistolary writing ... writers in this tradition combined narrative and letters in an amazing variety of interesting ways for” several reasons. Therefore, while traditionally epistolary novels may have been considered to be the ones including mainly collections of letters, there are some later novels in which letters play a significant role and they may also be part of epistolary narratives. In the present study, the chosen novels are written solely in the form of letters, thus following the traditional definition of the term.

Tracing the roots of novels in general, Visconti (1994) highlights the importance of the epistolary novel as a base for the development of later novels. The author also indicates that it is at the end of the seventeenth century when this text type becomes popular but it is during the eighteenth century when it flourishes. Visconti adds that the custom of communicating via letters, which was very common at the time, contributed to the development of this genre. Similarly, this explains the proliferation of letter-writing manuals as there was a social need to write letters on all occasions. The closeness between reality and the story told by means of an epistolary novel lies in the fact that it is told in first person, and as Visconti (1994: 299) points out, “It may ... be difficult to distinguish epistolary narrative from genuine correspondence”, as the two genres only differ “in the fact that the novel must present itself as a complete and self-contained world with all the information necessary to understand the story and its characters”.

Singer (1933: 20) analyses the epistolary novel genre from its beginnings to its decline. This author also refers to the importance of letter-writing manuals “in the development of the use of the letter as a literary ... instrument”, and he (1933: 25) adds, “They give a definite impulse and direction to the creation of the familiar letter as a form of literature”. This reinforces the connection between the two genres under analysis.

Finally, when referring to prose in general, McIntosh (1998: vii) observes changes in the eighteenth century, probably connected to the changes in society and she indicates that “Prose published around 1710 is characteristically more oral, more informal and colloquial, whereas late eighteenth-century prose became more bookish, more elegant, more precise, and more consciously rhetorical.” She also points to the fact that women writers became very important in that century and as such is reflected in the variety of text types produced by them.

5. The present study

5.1. The data

Since the number of epistolary novels and letter-writing manuals published between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries in Britain is large, the data have been restricted to three novels written by women and a selection of letter-writing manuals either aimed exclusively at women or mentioning *ladies* as part of their expected audience.

Since a diachronic analysis was intended, the three chosen novels were published between the end of the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century. They are composed mainly of letters although they also include some narration in-between the letters. The number of letters varies as does the length of each novel. They are as follows:

- *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (Aphra Behn, 1684) – consisting of three volumes, with a total of 99 letters.
- *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (Frances Burney, 1778) – containing 84 letters.
- *Lady Susan* (Jane Austen, written ca. 1794) – the shortest novel, including 41 letters in total.

Aphra Behn's novel was first published in three separate volumes, the first volume dating from 1684. *Evelina* was published at the height of the epistolary novel period, in 1778. The third epistolary novel, *Lady Susan*, was not published until 1871 (Gilson, 2005), despite possibly having been written in 1794 or in 1795 (Sutherland, 2005). It is important to note that the manuscript copy of *Lady Susan* that has survived possibly dates from the very beginning of the nineteenth century, as some of the papers include the year 1805 (Sutherland, 2005). Although the present study intends to observe the evolution of the salutation and subscription formulae

until the nineteenth century and none of the novels were probably written as late as that, the fact that *Lady Susan* was published posthumously in 1871 suggests that there is a possibility that this novel might have been manipulated by the editor or the publisher following some of the letter-writing conventions of the late nineteenth century.

Regarding the manuals used, they are as follows, in chronological order:

- *The Secretaries Studie* (1652)
- *The Female Secretary* (1671)
- *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1673)
- *A Supplement to the Queen-like Closet* (1674)
- *The Polite Lady; or a Course of Female Education* (1760)
- *The Art of Letter-Writing* (1762)
- *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer* (1763)
- *The Universal Letter-Writer, a new edition* (1822)
- *The Comprehensive Letter Writer* (1858)

5.2. The method

Selecting the data described in 4.1 was the first step. The selection of the novels was carried out considering several aspects. To begin with, they had to be epistolary and have been written by women. Secondly, they had to have been published over the period that was intended to be analysed, from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* has been claimed to be the first English epistolary novel (Gardiner, 1989), which explains why it was thought to be an appropriate choice to begin this study. The epistolary novel developed its potential in the eighteenth century and *Evelina* has been considered a "great epistolary novel" (Singer, 1933: 101) of such a century, which had mainly been dominated by popular novels written by men such as Richardson. Finally, the end of the eighteenth century appears to have witnessed the decline of this type of novels (Singer, 1933). The intention was to select the third novel as an example of nineteenth century epistolary novels, however, due to the lower number of these after 1800s, a different criterion was followed, the date of publication was considered rather than the date of composing the novel. *Lady Susan* was probably written at the end of the eighteenth century although it was not published until 1871 (see 4.1), which may imply some editorial manipulation, and therefore, the introduction of changes in the letter writing style.

After the selection of the novels, the next step was the choice of manuals. Two criteria were followed, first that the instruction was directed clearly at women or that women were mentioned on the front page of the manual as part of the intended audience. The three novels were downloaded from the Gutenberg Project webpage in plain text format. The manuals published in the seventeenth century were extracted from the Early English Books Online collection whereas the eighteenth and nineteenth century manuals were downloaded from Google Books.

A qualitative analysis was thought to be the most suitable option for the present study mainly due to the fact that the manuals contain both instructions and model

letters. This means that the examples found in the instruction sections could be used for qualitative analysis but not for a quantitative analysis, as they would not contribute to any conclusive results. Also, the types of letters vary considerably between the two genres, and this variation could imply a biased result because different types of letters would favour different types of salutations and subscriptions. In this respect, manuals usually include a wider variety of topics than the ones present in the novels. However, in the analysis of the novels some quantitative data are also provided.

The analysis was two-fold, as the texts were compared both diachronically within each text type and between the two genres. The manuals were analysed first. The salutations and the subscriptions were observed both in the sections that contained directions and instructions, in the manuals that included them, and in the model letters. The different formulae used in each manual were written down and analysed manually in order to observe possible patterns and trends. Next, they were compared diachronically. Following this, the salutations and subscriptions used in each novel were extracted and analysed manually. They were then grouped depending on their presence, their position in the letter (in the case of the salutations) and their structure (see Tables 1 and 2 in section 6). Finally, they were compared with the manuals.

6. Analysis and results

6.1. Salutations and subscriptions in Early and Late Modern English letter-writing manuals

Despite the differences observed in the letter-writing manuals analysed not only along history but also within each of the centuries, in all of them either directly or indirectly both salutations and subscriptions are found because they are part of the letters.

6.1.1. Salutations

Differences are found in the manuals despite them being subtle at times. In general, there seems to have been a change from a wider variety of salutations to the use of more fixed formulae. This can be particularly observed in personal familiar letters. On many occasions, these salutations contain very subjective adjectives, which refer directly to the addressee. In a similar way, the use of proper names in salutations was not common in the early manuals consulted. In this respect, the author of *The Female Secretary* indicates that ‘tis not customary to set down the Persons Name” (Care, 1671:148).

Apart from providing direction in relation to which salutations to use, some manuals also indicate that depending on the addressee, more or less distance should be left between the salutation and the body of the text. For instance, in *The Female Secretary* it is mentioned that the more familiar a relationship is, the less distance is required (Care, 1671: 148). These aspects are indirectly referring to pragmatic issues, particularly in relation to politeness.

In the seventeenth century manuals consulted, no salutations have been found with the proper name of the addressee, with the exception of one (*Susanna*, see below). On the other hand, when familiar letters are provided, it is very common to find the relationship term as in *Dear Daughter*, *Dear Cousin* or *Dear Friend*. However, *dear* is not always present. Instead, salutations such as *Madam* or *Sir* seem to be the most commonly recommended and used in the models, particularly when writing to a superior, although they can also be found in letters from children to either of their parents. Also, the adjective *Honoured* followed by the kinship term or nouns such as *Sir* or *Lady* are frequent. Finally, another common salutation is *My Lord*, which is both present in the instruction and in the models.

Despite the commonalities just mentioned, the first manual used in this study, *The Secretaries Studie*, is the one that displays more variation of all in the salutations used. Although it is not clearly stated, the letters contained in this manual were probably created by its writer, as can be inferred by comments on the front page such as the letters being “furnished with fit Phrases, Emphatical expressions, and various directions”. Variation is especially found in the amorous letters, where the letters written by a man often include adjectives in the salutation. Examples of these are *Dearest happiness*, *Divine Lady*, *My only happiness*, *Sweet sole* or *Glorious Lady*, to name but a few. Contrarily, women’s letters to their beloved men mainly start with the word *Sir* although occasionally more elaborate salutations can also be found, such as *Worthy Sir*, *Unkind Sir* or *Decrepit Sir*. This points to differences between men and women particularly in relation to women’s position in society, mainly dominated by men at the time, and possibly to politeness issues. In the more formal letters, adjectives are also frequently used. In this respect, salutations such as *Noble Sir*, *Good Lady* (or *Sir*), *Worthy Sir* or *Honourable Lord* are found.

The other seventeenth-century manuals consulted do not display the rich variety of adjectives that has just been described. Only occasionally, a qualifying adjective is present. For example, in *The Female Secretary*, *Sweet Friend* or *Grave Sir* are found in the model letters. These are also present in the section containing directions, specifically in the list of salutations provided, where *Cruel Beauty* or *Sweet Madam* can be found. However, the dominant expressions are *Sir* and *Madam*. The two manuals attributed to Woolley follow a very similar pattern to this and they hardly ever include adjectives apart from *dear*. Similarly, the most frequent salutations are *Sir* and *Madam*, followed by those introduced by *Dear* and the relation’s name, as in *Dear Friend* or *Dear Child*. Rarely expressions such as *Indeared Friend*, or *Beloved Cousin* are found in *The Gentlewomans Companion*, and in *A Supplement to the Queen-like Closet* a proper noun is present in one salutation. In fact, this salutation only includes the name, *Susanna*. This is the only example that has been observed in all the letters of the four manuals containing the name of the addressee and it is precisely in an informal context, in a letter from a mother to her daughter.

Eighteenth-century manuals present some differences when compared to the manuals of the previous century. Nevertheless, the expressions *Sir* and *Madam* are dominant, with the exception of *The Polite Lady*, which is not surprising as in this manual all the letters are between a mother and a daughter, which most

probably explains the limited variation in the salutations used in it. Similarly to the seventeenth-century manuals, the expressions including *Dear* and the kinship term are also common. For instance, *Dear Mother*, *Dear Niece* or *Dear Brother* appear. As regards the differences, the presence of other adjectives is very rare with the exception of the occasional expression such as *Good Madam* or *Honoured Madam* (or *Sir*). However, the clearest difference between the two centuries is in the use of first names following *Dear* or *My Dear*. For example, in *The Ladies Complete Letter-writer*, *Dear Lucy* or *My Dear Sally* can be found in the model letters. In the instruction provided both in *The Ladies Complete Letter-writer* and in *The Art of Letter-Writing*, which is almost identical, no reference to the use of proper nouns is made as they seem to focus more on the salutations to people of higher ranks and the proper names only appear in more familiar contexts. The case of *The Polite Lady* deserves a special comment as all the letters are only exchanged between two people, a mother and her daughter *Sophy*. This explains why the only two salutations used are *My dear Sophy* and *Dear Mamma*. It is interesting to note that the two contain features that were hardly, if ever, present in seventeenth-century manuals, the use of the proper name, *Sophy*, and the colloquial and familiar word to refer to the mother, *Mamma*. Seventeenth-century manuals opted for *Dear Daughter* and *Dear Mother* instead.

A final feature that can be seen in one of the eighteenth-century manuals, *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*, is the presence of the salutation inside the first line of the letter rather than as an introduction to it. For example, in letter CXII, the following appears: “You oblige me extremely, *Madam*, to...”. Even though this is not very frequent, it is important to refer to it, as it is a characteristic that has not been found in other manuals.

In the nineteenth century there seems to be a continuation of some of the characteristics of the manuals of the previous century, and a maintenance of the most popular salutations already present in the seventeenth-century instruction manuals. The uses of *Sir* and *Madam* remain the most common both in the model letters and in the instructions provided. In familiar letters, in addition to the combination of *Dear* with the relationship term, as in *Dear Daughter* or *Dear Father*, the presence of proper nouns appears to be gaining ground. For instance, both in *The Universal Letter-Writer* and in *The Comprehensive Letter-Writer* salutations such as *Dear Sam* or *My dear Cecilia* are found. There is only one salutation that did not seem to be popular in the previous centuries but it is encountered in these two manuals, the word *Gentlemen*, which is both mentioned in the instruction and also present in some model letters.

6.1.2. Subscriptions

One of the most common ways of starting a subscription in all the manuals is with the determiner *your* or the pronoun *yours*. In a similar way, the noun *servant* appears frequently, usually modified by the adjective *humble*. Other adjectives such as *affectionate*, *dutiful*, *obliged* and *obedient* are also common, not only in combination with *servant* but also with kinship terms such as *mother* or *son*.

Seventeenth-century manuals display fairly similar subscriptions which include the characteristics that have just been described. However, those found in *The Secretaries Studie* deserve special attention due to the higher degree of variation that can be observed. As in the salutations present in this manual, the subscriptions also show the creativity of the writer, as can be observed in *your devout/sincere adorer*, *yours in prevailing truth* or *your living dying friend*. This is particularly the case in the amorous and familiar letters whereas in more formal letters *yours*, followed by some comment, is found before the signature, as in *yours, most dutiful*. In *The Female Secretary*, *your humble servant* is the most common expression but in familiar letters both instruction and models show long noun phrases as subscriptions, for example, *your most affectionate husband till death* or *your loving and most obedient daughter*. Woolley's manuals follow the pattern described of noun phrases with adjectives introduced by *your*.

Some novelties seem to have been introduced in eighteenth-century manuals. For instance, the inclusion of &c. at the end of some of the subscriptions becomes common in the three manuals analysed. Particularly, the most common phrase where this is used is accompanying the pronoun *yours*, as in *yours, &c.* This ending is also instructed in *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*. Together with the frequent expression of *your humble/obedient/obliged servant*, other noun phrases are common. These include particularly the adjective *affectionate*, and when children write to their parents, the adjectives preferred are *dutiful*, *obedient* and *obliged*. Also frequent are the expressions beginning with *I am*, on occasion simply followed by &c. The subscriptions in *The Polite Lady* are very limited as there are only two writers, the mother uses either *your affectionate mother* or *yours, &c.* whereas the daughter opts for the typical adjectives used by children in other manuals, namely *dutiful*, *obedient* and *obliged*.

In the nineteenth century the tendencies initiated in the previous century appear to have been established as norms. While it is clear that the formula *your humble servant* seems the preferred option in formal letters, those letters exchanged between people who knew each other well opt for the use of adjectives, as has been described before. Similarly, the use of sentences opening with *I am* is also prevalent. It is in *The Comprehensive Letter-Writer* where expressions that are common today appear for the first time, these are *yours sincerely* and *your faithfully*. In addition, the use of *yours* in combination with other words is also a regular feature, as in *ever yours*, *yours very affectionately* or *yours truly*. This manual also recommends in the instruction section the use of phrases like *I am, Sir, your obedient servant* when concluding a letter. The fact that expressions such as *your humble servant* or *your obedient servant* continue appearing at this time reinforces the idea that many manuals continued copying model letters from manuals written in the previous century (Hannan, 2016).

6.2. Salutations and subscriptions in the epistolary novels

Before describing the main characteristics of the salutations and the subscriptions of each novel, a few general characteristics need to be mentioned. To begin with, the

three novels under analysis differ in length, *Lady Susan* being the shortest and *Love Letters* the longest. Also, despite being epistolary novels, sometimes there seems to be some narration in third person placed between some letters. This is particularly the case in Aphra Behn's novel, where this narration outside the letters themselves appears to gain ground as the parts of the novel develop, with the third part containing the most. One example of this can be found when the author refers to something that Sylvia did and writes: "This letter she sent him back by his page, ... at the same time she threatened him with banishment".

In addition, in *Evelina* there are not only very long letters but also many of them are a "continuation" of the following, as indicated at the beginning of them. This does not occur in the other two novels. This may explain some of the differences explained below regarding the types of salutation or subscription used.

Very often the novels also include a type of superscription at the beginning⁴, whose function is possibly to guide the reader so as to know who is writing to whom in each letter. For instance, in Aphra Behn's novel, these are some of the superscriptions: *To Philander*, *To Sylvia* and *Octavio to Philander*. Similarly, in *Evelina*, both in the table of contents and at the beginning of each letter the names of the writer and the addressee are included, using the same formula, *X person to X person*, and the same applies to the letters in *Lady Susan*.

6.2.1. Salutations

The three novels included in the present analysis differ in terms of their content. These differences probably contribute to some of the variation found when comparing them, depending on whether they include more or less formal letters, the presence of more or less formal salutations will be more prevalent. Similarly, the novels vary in relation to the presence of salutation formulae and their position in the letters (see Table 1).

Behn's novel displays both formal and informal salutations at the beginning of the letters. Expressions such as *Madam* and *My Lord* are the most common, whereas the use of *dear* is not frequent. The use of other adjectives is also a regular feature. For example, *Fair angry Sylvia*, *My everlasting Charmer* or *My adorable Sylvia* are some of the salutations present. These examples show that the use of proper nouns is also a characteristic of these salutations. As regards the presence of the salutation and its position (see Table 1 for total figures), in over half of the instances the salutation appears as part of the first sentence of the letter, as in "There is no pain, *my dear Octavio*, either...", The absence of salutations is also observed, as is its position at the beginning of the letters, in a separate line, where the formal formulae of *Sir* and *Madam* are only found.

In Burney's *Evelina* three different types of beginnings can be observed in the letters. These are the use of a salutation followed by the letter in the next line; the incorporation of the salutation, separated by commas, in the first line of the letter;

⁴ These superscriptions are also instructed in the manuals but they have been left out of this study because no variation can be observed in these fixed structures.

and the absence of salutation. This last type is the most frequent (see Table 1 for total figures) and it is found in those letters which are a continuation from the previous letter, in other words, there did not seem to be a need for addressing, as the addressee had already been mentioned before. Regarding the salutations that appear at the beginning, followed by the letter, in addition to the commonly used *Sir* and *Madam*, *Dear Sir*, *Dear Madam* and *Dear Rev. Sir* are the most frequent. It is in the salutations incorporated in the first line of the letter where more variation is found. For instance, “Once more, *my dearest Son*, ...” and “Be not alarmed, *my worthy friend*, ...” are present in some of the letters. As can be observed, although some salutations are the same as in the previous group, there seem to be more conventional expressions as evidenced by the use of adjectives such as *worthy* and the superlative form *dearest*.

Lady Susan is the shortest of the three novels under analysis. It is also the one with the least number of formal letters as opposed to the previous two. There is a total of forty-one letters and in 10 of them there is no salutation present (see Table 1 for total figures). In the remaining letters the salutations are either present immediately before the body of the letter, although not in a separate line, where the punctuation seems to point to a separation before the salutation and the rest of the letter, as in *My dear Sir*;—*I have this moment received your letter* (Letter XIV); or incorporated in the first line, as has been observed in the previous novels, as is the case of *I received your note, my dear Alicia, just before I left town* (Letter V). In either case, the formulae used are very similar. In most cases they include either the first name of the person the letter is addressed to or that of the relation. For instance, it is very common to read salutations such as *My dear mother*, *Dear brother*, (*My*) *dear Alicia* or *My dearest friend*. Although the expression *Madam* is not found, *Sir* is also a regular introduction in the more formal letters.

| Novel | No salutation | Salutation separated from the body of the letter | Salutation incorporated in the first line of the letter | Total |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Love letters</i> | 24 (24%) | 56 (57%) | 19 (19%) | 99 (100%) |
| <i>Evelina</i> | 52 (61%) | 6 (7%) | 26 (32%) | 84 (100%) |
| <i>Lady Susan</i> | 10 (25%) | 19 (46%) | 12 (29%) | 41 (100%) |

Table 1. Salutations in the novels according to their presence and location in the letters

6.2.2. Subscriptions

The analysis of the three novels shows a few similarities, but it mainly points to some differences. Whereas the content of the novels may have influenced these, in general there seems to be a development in time towards a more fixed type of subscription as the centuries advance.

As regards their similarities (see Table 2), the term *adieu* is present in the three novels although its frequency varies, being most commonly used in *Evelina*. It should be noted, however, that this term is hardly ever used as a subscription as such, it is

often found in the concluding paragraph and often followed by addressing the person that the letter is for and a longer comment. For instance, in *Evelina* the following is found: “*Adieu*, my dear Sir, ...”. The three novels display subscriptions introduced by the possessive adjective *your*, followed by a noun or an adjective modifying a noun. An example of this is *Your most obedient and humble servant*, where the adjectives *devoted*, *faithful* and *most obliged* are modifying *servant*. Although *servant* is commonly found in this structure (13% in *Love Letters*, 60% in *Evelina* and 10% in *Lady Susan*), other nouns are also present, usually referring to kinship relationships and preceded by the adjective *affectionate*, as in *your affectionate sister*.

Another similarity is that it is not infrequent to find that the writer concludes simply with his/her name or not even this, although differences can be observed⁵. In Behn’s novel the final paragraph seems to lead to the signature by including the writer’s name in the syntax of the text, although positioned in a separate line, as in “thou⁶ who commandest all his artillery, put them on, and fly to thy languishing SYLVIA”. In *Evelina* the letters that are usually left without a subscription, and even with no signature, are those that *Evelina* writes as a continuation of other letters. In *Lady Susan* these letters are few and are exchanged between the same two characters. In addition, the use of *Yours* followed by the name of the writer is also a commonality between the two earlier novels.

| Novel | <i>Adieu</i> (on its own or not) | No subscription | <i>Your /thy</i> ⁷ + (modifier) + noun | Other | Total |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Love letters</i> | 4 (4%) | 8 (8%) | 31 (31%) | 56 (57%) | 99 (100%) |
| <i>Evelina</i> | 28 (33%) | 40 (48%) | 15 (18%) | 1 (1%) | 84 (100%) |
| <i>Lady Susan</i> | 3 (7%) | 4 (10%) | 10 (24%) | 24 (59%) | 41 (100%) |

Table 2. Subscriptions in the novels

Despite their similarities, the three novels differ in several aspects in relation to the form of the subscriptions used⁸. In Behn’s novel the letters exchanged between lovers are usually concluded with a subscription that contains an adjective expressing emotion in general. For instance, some of the subscriptions are *the lost Philander*, *unfortunate Sylvia*, *impatient adorer* or *thy languishing Sylvia*. In letters between other characters in the novel other noun phrases can be found with different adjectives such as *your affectionate sister* or *constant friend*.

Burney’s most frequent endings are either the combinations with the French word *adieu* or the lack of subscription, as already described above. However, there

⁵ Due to the variety of all of these forms, they have all been included in the category of ‘other’ in Table 2.

⁶ Note the use of the archaic form *thou* instead of *you*.

⁷ The archaic form *thy* in some salutations is only found in Aphra Behn’s novel.

⁸ These refer mainly to the phrases introduced by *your* and those incorporated in the category of ‘other’ in Table 2, as will be explained below.

are some subscriptions that differ, despite their resemblance to those found in Behn's novel. Although the use of nouns modified by adjectives is also a feature of *Evelina*, these are usually longer phrases, as *your dutiful and affectionate, though unpolished, Evelina* or *sincerely affectionate and obliged Evelina*. These adjectives do not refer to the feelings of the writers, as many do in Behn's work, but they resemble the more formal subscriptions that included the word *servant*, that is, they focus on the relationship towards the addressee and the relative power difference between the writer and the recipient. Another type of subscription found here is a formula beginning with *I am*, followed by sentiments to the addressee, as in *I am, with all love and duty, your Evelina*. Finally, on one occasion *&c.* is observed in one letter immediately before the signature.

The most common subscription in *Lady Susan* is *yours ever (&c.)*, followed by *yours, &c.* The word *yours* is also found on its own and as part of other phrases such as *yours faithfully*, being the first of the novels analysed where this is present. Similarly, *your* introduces other regular phrases such as *your affectionate brother* or *your sincerely attached*. It is important to note that Austen adds *&c.* to different endings apart from the ones mentioned and she also shares with Burney the subscriptions beginning with *I am*.

Interestingly, when Tables 1 and 2 are observed, *Love Letters* and *Lady Susan* seem to share some features. However, as has just been indicated, when specific examples and the category of 'other' in the subscriptions are analysed, variation exists. Particularly, what can be found is that Aphra Behn uses many more adjectives as modifiers than Jane Austen's work, where *affectionate* appears as the main qualifier. Also, some expressions present in *Lady Susan* resemble some structures that are used in more recent times, as *yours faithfully*.

7. Manuals versus novels

Despite the differences between the two genres, similarities are also observed. In terms of general structure, whereas the novels sometimes incorporate a short narration in-between some of the letters, some of the manuals include sections on instructions. As regards the salutations and subscriptions found, there seems to be a corresponding evolution in both genres, although some variation is also encountered.

In the seventeenth century both starting and concluding a letter appear to have been a more creative activity, explained by the high number of different adjectives found. Similarly, formulae do not seem to have been as fixed as in later centuries, particularly in the nineteenth century, when expressions that are clearly fixed today (e.g. *yours faithfully*) appear for the first time. In addition, the use of a person's name in the salutations appears to have been a late eighteenth-century innovation. Furthermore, the uses of introductory terms such as *dear* seem to have been first connected to informal and familiar letters rather than in formal letters while *Madam* and *Sir* seem to have fallen into disuse as time advanced despite still being present in some formal letters. When concluding, the proliferation of the use of *&c.* at the end

of some subscriptions and the introduction of subscriptions with *I am* appear to have been parallel in both genres.

Throughout the period analysed there are some structures that are present in the novels and not in the manuals. For instance, the term *adieu* used on its own or accompanied by a phrase is found in the three novels (see Table 2 in 6.2.2) as a subscription. This French borrowing had been found in real letters in previous studies (see section 2). Also, the name of the writer is often included at the end, as a signature, without a previous subscription. However, the clearest dissimilarity between novels and manuals regarding the two aspects analysed is the absence of subscriptions and the higher presence of salutations incorporated in the first line of the text in some letters in the novels as opposed to those in the manuals. The former may be due to the fact that the letters in an epistolary novel are part of a longer piece of narration that follows in consecutive letters whereas the letters in the manuals are independent texts. The latter feature is occasionally found in eighteenth-century manuals but its higher presence in the novels points to a possible technique used by writers to make the narration flow more easily. All this is in line with what Visconti (1994) refers to when regarding the similarities and differences between the two genres.

In general, it is when the two types of genres are examined as a whole, rather than only the salutations and the subscriptions, that some features presented in the novels show the narrative cohesion created by the letters included in them. However, this cohesion is achieved in different ways in the three novels. For instance, in Aphra Behn's, sometimes a narrative piece of text explains the context of some of the letters. In this respect, there are comments such as "written in a leaf of a table-book", which are not part of any letters but simply a comment so as to help the reader visualise the context of the text better. Similarly, at the beginning of the second part of the book, the writer sets the scene by recalling how the first part concluded, as this second part starts with "At the end of the first part, we left Philander...". In *Evelina*, there are many letters that are a continuation of the previous one written mainly by Evelina. Very often these are letters without a salutation and there is no indication of the addressee, even in a superscription, as this is not required because the reader has read the previous letter and knows the context. In the case of *Lady Susan*, the narration seems to be enhanced by superscriptions such as "From the same to the same", which obviously mean that the reader is familiar with who is writing to whom because they have read the previous letters in the novel. Furthermore, the repeated use of references to places and people in the letters establishes a connection between all of them.

8. Conclusion

Although manuals often claimed that they included real letters, it may not be easy to know to what extent the letters they contained were in fact real. For instance, in the case of *The Secretaries Studie* the comments by the author both on the front

page and in the letter addressing the readers seem to point to the fact that in this particular book the letters were invented for the purpose of instruction. This means that, at least in some of the manuals, they may have been as fictional as the letters included in the epistolary novels. Leaving the content aside, both genres appear to have followed similar patterns regarding the salutations and the subscriptions used.

It seems clear that the style of the seventeenth century was different from that of the nineteenth century and that this applies not only to the letters in the manuals but to those in the novels as well. Undoubtedly, there is an evolution towards a more fixed set of formulae as time advances. Similarly, there appears to be a connection between what the manuals instructed and what the novelists used, which suggests that the three authoresses were familiar with the directions provided in the manuals and they probably had had access to some of these books before writing their novels. Also, the novels display, on occasion, some archaic language features, which suggest that they may have followed manuals printed in previous decades or reprints of manuals from earlier times.

Although the similarities and differences between the two genres regarding the use of salutations and subscriptions do not provide many insights into the features that contribute to understanding the epistolary novels as narrative texts different from the manuals, a wider analysis of the novels as a whole points to the presence of other characteristics that help to establish a cohesion between the letters included. Further studies on this should contribute to a clarification on these issues.

Since the present study only focuses on women writers, further research is expected to include similar analyses of novels written by men and to compare them with manuals aimed at men in order to see if men followed a similar pattern and if they were also influenced by instruction manuals when writing.

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OD PRIRUČNIKA ZA PISANJE PISAMA DO ZABAVNIH EPISTOLARNIH ROMANA: PISMA U OBA ŽANRA OD 17. DO 19. VEKA

Apstrakt

Ova studija predstavlja analizu pozdrava i završnih formula u pismima kroz različite žanrove u periodu kasnog modernog engleskog jezika. Rad upoređuje priručnike za pisanje pisama namenjene ženama i tri epistolarna romana (*Ljubavna pisma između pleića i njegove sestre, Evelina, Lejdi Suzan*) koje su napisale žene, odnosno Afra Ben, Fransis Berni i Džejn Ostin, a koji su napisani u periodu od kraja sedamnaestog veka do devetnaestog veka. Cilj rada je da prati razvoj formula za početak i završetak pisama kroz vekove u oba žanra i da ih međusobno uporedi. Rezultati pokazuju da između dva žanra postoji više sličnosti nego razlika, kao i da se promene uočene u formulama korišćenim u priručnicima kroz istoriju mogu pronaći i u romanima. Zaključak je da su romanopisci verovatno bili upoznati sa uputstvima iz priručnika, ali da, uprkos

uočenim lingvističkim sličnostima, pisma u romanima stvaraju narativ koji prevazilazi pomenuta uputstva.

Ključne reči: pozdravi u pismima, završne formule u pismima, priručnici za pisanje pisama, epistolarni romani, rani moderni engleski jezik, kasni moderni engleski jezik

