Editing a Georgian Archive

The Mary Hamilton Papers

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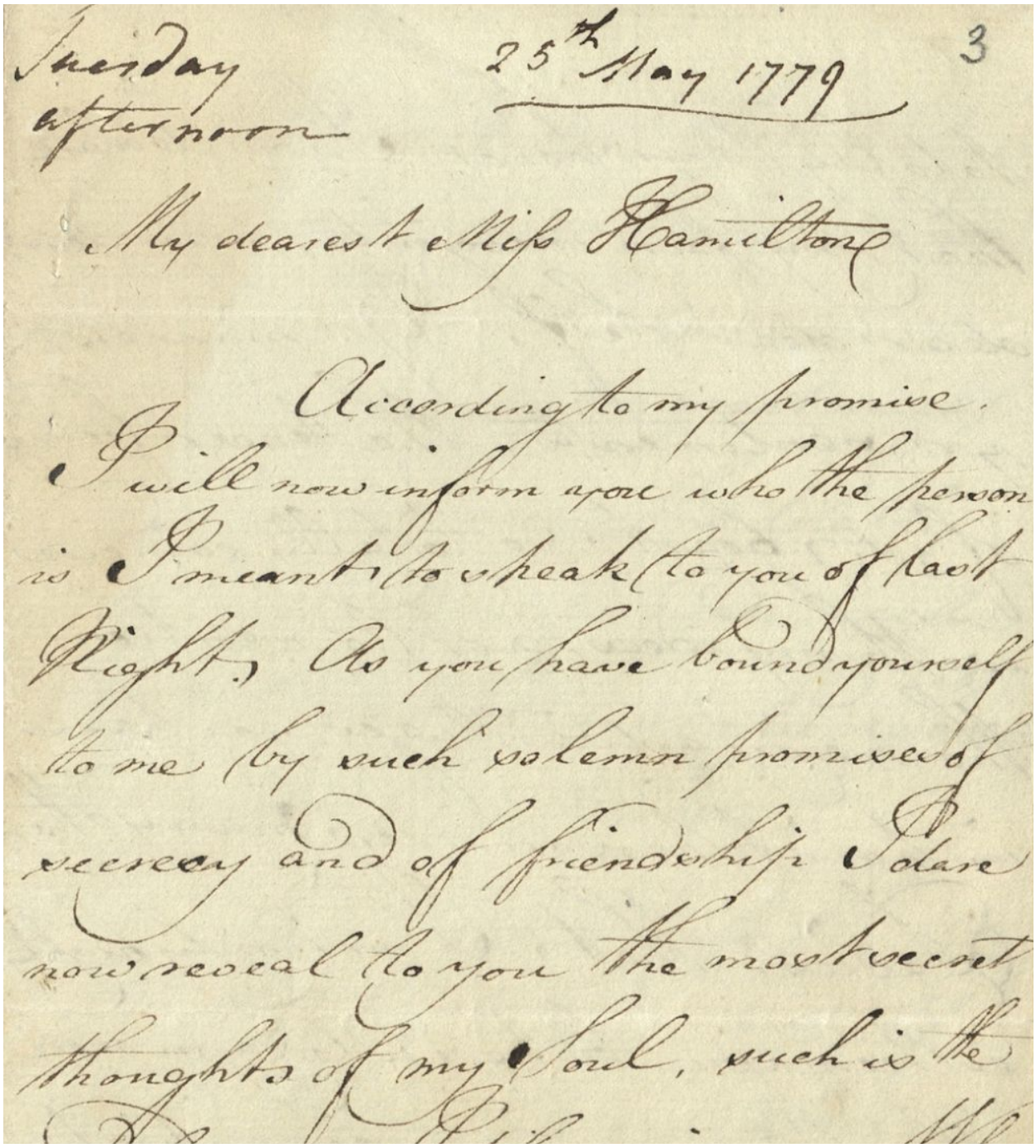
Sunday afternoon 25th May 1779 3

My dearest Miss Hamilton

According to my promise, I will now inform you who the person is I meant to speak to you of last night. As you have bound yourself to me by such solemn promises of secrecy and of friendship I dare now reveal to you the most secret thoughts of my soul, such is the

Outline

The Mary Hamilton Papers are a part of the University of Manchester Library's Special Collections, containing 2,474 pieces of correspondence, 16 diaries and 6 manuscript volumes. Mary Hamilton (1756-1816) was a well-connected and highly cultured woman in eighteenth-century British polite society. Her correspondence is invaluable for research about reading, letter-writing and everyday language in Georgian England and the contribution made by social networks to these significant cultural practices. These letters and manuscripts are in the process of being transcribed, tagged and coded, using high-quality images produced by the John Rylands library. Part of our project was to contribute to this process and transcribe a selection of letters. We then continued to explore the role of letters in upper class eighteenth-century England and their use in literary, historical and linguistic research. This includes an analysis of the role of individual letters as a historical record, and their position as entertainment in eighteenth-century British polite society.

The Editing Process

Qiaoshen Hua

Our project started with the editing of letters. Each of us got one or two letters to edit, during which we got the chance to read and engage with the genuine texts of the Georgian period. The transcriptions were submitted to the Unlocking the Mary Hamilton Papers team to be processed, and all 7 of our transcriptions are now posted on the project website. Three of us edited two letters each: Aileen Loftus edited HAM/1/7/7/3 and HAM/1/6/8/25; Qiaoshen Hua edited HAM/1/7/7/2 and HAM 1/6/8/4; Tillie Quattrone edited HAM/1/7/7/4 and HAM/1/7/7/5. Lauren O'Connor and Anne de Reynier divided up HAM/1/6/8/1, which is a very long letter (pp.1-6 edited by Anne and pp.7-end edited by Lauren.

One of the aims of editing these letters is to present the original spelling and layout in a more readable way as they can be useful in some research. Following the guidelines provided by the project, we reproduced the spelling and punctuation exactly and coded them in XML (eXtensible Markup Language using TEI (Text Encoding Initiative. The subset of TEI that was adopted allowed us to mark up most of the features in the body of the letters. Editing with TEI is mostly enjoyable as it is usually simple and intuitive. However, it can also be complex. For example, a date like '15th September 1809' is tagged as '<date when="1809-09-15">15<hi rend="superscript">th</hi> September 1809</date>'. And 'Lord & Lady Parker' is tagged as '<persName>Lord</persName> and <persName>Lady Parker</persName>'.

Another challenge that we faced was the handwriting of the letters. While most words were easy to identify and some turned clear once we got used to the writer's handwriting, some remained unreadable. When there is an unreadable word, one possible way is to use the edited letters as a corpus and look for the collocations of the word before or after the unreadable word. For example, if 'Affectionate' in 'Your Affectionate friend' is unreadable, we can search 'friend' in the corpus of edited letters and turns out 'affectionate' is the 12th most popular collocation to the left of 'friend'. Another way to identify an unreadable word is to search its readable part in the corpus to get inspired. For example, if the only readable part of 'constitution' is 'cons', we can search 'cons' in the corpus and we may find the word 'constitution' in the first couple of examples.

Although editing is sometimes difficult, it is mostly enjoyable. A sense of achievement comes when a blurred word is identified. And it is so much fun to read these letters! In one of the letters (HAM/1/7/7/2) the writer described a 'Great Duke' as 'a very ugly little man' and used underlines to emphasise this description. Seems every one of my teammates laughed when they saw this sentence. They also mentioned a lot of chores in the letters which gives a feeling that the reader is prying into the personal life which was happening 200 years ago. What's more, there are sentences expressing the writer's understanding of life, and they are very inspiring.

A Letter in Focus
Lauren O'Connor

The letter 'HAM/1/6/8/1' is part of a correspondence between Mary Hamilton and John Hope in which Hope requests that Hamilton write to his uncle, Lord Hope, in his support and with a revealing anecdote which requires evaluation. This assessment specifically focuses on Page 7 and onwards, and takes a historiographical approach to its contents to highlight the complexities of Georgian era politics.

The letter reveals new information surrounding the political conflict between John Wilkes and John Stuart, 'Lord Bute', Prime Minister of 1762-3. Wilkes was in favour of the Seven Years' War, which ended during Bute's time in office with the treaty of Paris. Thus, Wilkes began a weekly publication, 'The North Briton', "to attack the new ministry" (Thomas, 2008) and "bring down Bute" (Cash, 2006). In 1969 Wilkes stood for one of the two Middlesex Knights of the Shire, "generally reckoned the most prestigious" seat in the country (Cash, 2006). Wilkes was an extremely controversial and radical figure opposed by many aristocratic figures as "Wilkes fought for 'liberty'" from arbitrary arrest, for the rights of voters and for a free press with the right to criticise the government (Thomas, 2008). Redlich and Hirst see the Middlesex Election as the beginning of the democratic movement (Cash, 2006).

This feud directly involves Mary Hamilton and John Hope as Hope's parliamentary career began and ended with the Middlesex Election. In 1768, Hope was "chosen by the influence of his uncle, John Hope, second earl of Hopetoun, to succeed his father as MP for Linlithgowshire" (Watt & Herrle, 2004). He then lost his seat in 1770 and, although never directly mentioned in the letter, we know that this was ultimately due to his opinions on Wilkes. Hope showed "equivocal support for the government in the Wilkes affair" (Watt & Herrle, 2004) and voted for him in the Middlesex Election. This caused contention with Hope's sponsors and his uncle, thus support was retracted and he was replaced by James Dundas. In a letter to Wilkes himself, Hope writes that "it was chiefly in your cause I suffered" (Hope, n.d.).

Hope reveals in his letter to Hamilton that he feels he was unfairly voted out and writes that he lost his seat "because I would not give my vote in the House of Commons agreeable with their selfish views". He requests that she write to Lord Hope about this matter as she "may gain more credit" than him due to the position of her family. In the proposed letter it is disclosed that during "Mr Hope Weir's last election of the County of Linlithgow, several people in the Court interest came to my father, with an express request, from Lord Bute, that if he would not vote for Sir William Cuningham… [he] would not give his vote for Mr Hope"; this section in particular calls for an in-depth analysis.

The passage is difficult to assess for a number of reasons. First of all, the mention of a 'Mr Hope Weir' is initially confusing, however we can deduce that this is a reference to Hope's father, Charles Hope-Weir, the previous MP of Linlithgow, as John Hope is always referred to as 'Mr Hope'. Hope-Weir was a Member of Parliament from 1743 to 1769, and Lord Bute was most prominently politically active between 1761-1763, hence we may date the occurrence around this time. Furthermore, the "several people" who relayed the message that would be "in the Court interest" remain nameless, and may have been the intended focus of this anecdote. We fall into difficulties once more when determining who "William Cuningham" was, yet from the surrounding context we can deduce that he was a political ally of Lord Bute and therefore opposed to Wilkes' principles. Nonetheless, we will focus specifically on the identifiable individuals who are mentioned by name.

In this passage Bute is asking Hope-Weir to vote for Cuningham, otherwise Bute refuses to vote for a 'Mr Hope'. We would expect this to be a reference to John Hope, yet he was elected as a Member of Parliament in 1769 and this does not correspond to our dates. Perhaps it was commonly known amongst the politically active, elite groups that Hope-Weir's son would succeed him as a Member of Parliament for Linlithgowshire, provided he had enough support. Should this be the case, Bute is using this information to his advantage in order to gain votes for Cuningham. As we know that Hope supported Wilkes, and Bute and Wilkes were politically opposed, this interaction is interesting. There is perhaps an implication that Hope-Weir was more inclined to support Bute than Wilkes, and we can deduce that Hope may have not only disappointed his uncle with his vote in the Middlesex Election, but also his father.

Hope wanted his uncle Lord Hope to know about this event in the hopes that it would “be of use in removing one cause of the displeasure of his relations” and perhaps ease tensions with their “political friends”. This anecdote serves to distance Hope from Wilkes by aligning his father and therefore himself more closely with Lord Bute; Hope is attempting to strengthen his own image and conceal his true opinions on Wilkes. The accuracy of Hope’s claim that Lord Bute requested this of his father is difficult to determine, however if true then this letter illuminates the nature of political proceedings. In this instance it appears somewhat transactional, yet more importantly it displays that true political power was heavily concentrated within the elite groups and families in Britain.

Another interesting aspect that we can extract from the letter is the prominence of slander and attempts to defame political opponents, which is hinted when Hope writes that he considered publishing letters that “would have materially injured” his uncle’s reputation. This is further corroborated by what we know of Wilkes’ ‘The North Briton’, as its sole purpose was to attack Lord Bute’s credibility. Moreover, Hope writes of his “over-anxious concern about his reputation” in a separate document on his Parliamentary proceedings (Hope, 1772). Thus, we can conjecture the importance of reputation for a successful political career in the Georgian era.

This assessment is somewhat limited as it focuses solely on the subject of politics and neglects other aspects and themes. The letter itself is autobiographical and Hope extensively details his confinement for debt and his emotions surrounding the death of his wife Mary Breton, who committed suicide in 1767. Despite this, the letter is highly valuable for assessing the nature of politics in the 1760s and 1770s. The letter also highlights the connections that Hope had to many key politicians of the era. Regarding Hamilton specifically, the letter reveals that she had a role in politics through her relationships to men, which was common for many upper-class women at this time. However, we must also note that in 1773, when this letter was written, Hamilton was just 17 years old. As Hope believed she had great political influence, we come to an extraordinary revelation that Hamilton must have been very mature for her age and more than capable in dealing with political affairs. We can also infer that she had a prominent and influential position in the society she lived in, despite her age and gender, which is highly unusual no matter the era. Overall, the letter contributes to a wider, more substantial understanding of Georgian politics.

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Letters as Entertainment
Aileen Loftus

Letter writing was more than a mode of communication for the upper classes in eighteenth-century England. Writing and reading letters was a form of art, and a form of entertainment that was becoming increasingly widespread as postal routes rapidly expanded. The ability to write a good letter was a highly valued skill, and letter writing guides were widely available. Epistolary novels were also becoming an increasingly popular genre, and so letters were further commodified as a form of entertainment. Perhaps a reason for the genre's popularity was the sense of privacy of the letter form; reading letters can give access to a person's inner emotions and feelings, and if you are not the named recipient, reading them is enticing and intriguing. This is how it feels to read the correspondence in the Mary Hamilton papers today, and reading them is undoubtedly a form of entertainment. As well as the obvious examples of references to letters, within the Mary Hamilton collection the practice of letter writing and reading is mentioned many times. Letters are shared, passed on, read aloud, destroyed and kept hidden, revealing a web of communication and gossip that show the entertaining aspects of letters. Letter writing is a form of writing that sits ambiguously between public and private worlds, it is at once a social form that is crafted to be read by others, and a private communication that reveals people's thoughts and feelings that were not intended to be read by anyone but the recipient. This also meant that letters are also one of the earliest forms of widespread, uncensored female writing, with letters providing women with the freedom to write, freedom that they did not have complete access to in other literary forms.

Letters and Literature
Letter writing guides were widely published in the eighteenth-century, but the letter's influence on books did not end there. The poet Alexander Pope was the first writer in English to publish from his own letters in his lifetime, and in doing so he set a new kind of precedent for epistolary self-fashioning. Letters were therefore a crucial influence on the evolution of biography, constituting part of a deliberate, self-selected record of an author's life. This evolved into fiction. Epistolary fiction first appeared in the 17th century with works such as Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister.* The form enabled authors to mimic the work and writing of real life that audiences were already familiar with. It is a simple way to demonstrate differing points of view and inner thoughts and feelings without the device of an omniscient narrator. The form became increasingly popular, reaching the peak of its popularity in the 18th century in the works of such authors as Samuel Richardson, with his immensely successful novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* published in the 1740s. The difference between these fictional epistolary novels and the reality of a collection of letters is their completeness. The Mary Hamilton correspondences are full of gaps and are predominantly one-sided, leaving a

frustrating sense of mystery as you are unable to read her replies. There are also assumed meetings of the people in the letters between correspondence, conversations which were therefore never recorded and so cannot be read. Our desire to hear, or read, these conversations reveals the extent to which they are entertaining, and our intrigue is the root of the epistolary novel.

Evelina, a novel Mary Hamilton notes reading in the diary covering the period from 5 December 1783 to 16 January 1784, reveals the importance of letter writing for women in particular. Evelina was published in 1778. It was Frances Burney's first novel, but her name was not originally printed; instead, she frames herself as an anonymous 'Editor'. In Burney's novel, Evelina writes about her confusion and experiences as she attempts to navigate a culture with contradictory rituals and expectations for young women. In the novel, letters allow women to express thoughts and feelings and reveal the importance of female friendship for young women, with Evelina's friendship and correspondence with Maria Mirvan. While many of the letters are written to Evelina's guardian, Reverend Arthur Villars, it is women's voices that prevail and dominate the text: out of 84 letters, men write only 17. Women's letters also frame each volume of the text, and begin and end the entire narrative. It is the women who have structural and literary agency, and it is the epistolary format that enables this. The Mary Hamilton papers contain a huge amount of female correspondence, and Hamilton wrote extensively to many female friends throughout her lifetime, including to Frances Burney. This correspondence brought entertainment to both parties, through the sharing of news, gossip, thoughts and feelings.

The popularity of epistolary fiction in the 18th century also reveals the expansion of readers, particularly of female readers. Reading fiction was increasingly enjoyed as female entertainment, as women were increasingly represented within them. The letters in *Evelina,* amongst other novels including *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, authenticate and validate women's domestic and social experience. They show that the inner turmoils and thoughts of women were entertaining to readers, and therefore place value upon them. Despite passing the peak of its popularity in the 1700s, the form has continued to be used by and for women, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* which became one of the most popular epistolary works of the 19th Century. Margaret Atwood also plays with the form in *The Handmaid's Tale,* where the 'Historical Notes' present the entire work as a collection of recorded tapes that have been edited into an assumed order for a text that the reader has just read, a trick of form not dissimilar to Frances Burney's pretend 'editor'. *The Handmaid's Tale* is one of the most significant late 20th century novels for giving a voice to oppressed women, and it is no coincidence that Atwood used the epistolary form to do so. Letters are shown to be long standing forms of entertainment, but also long lasting as a location of female emancipation.

Sharing Letters

Letters are regularly shared in Georgian literature, such as in Jane Austen's *Emma,* where letters are read aloud, passed along, and, in the case of Miss Bates' with the letters of Jane

Fairfax, repeatedly, incessantly quoted. Letters are not seen as private, but as sources of entertainment and news for the entire village of Highbury. In the Mary Hamilton collection evidence can be found for letters to function in the same way, with Hamilton often sharing and reading aloud from the letters she received from friends, and reference to her recipients doing the same in turn. Often this appears to be gossip, or news of mutual friends, such as when Anna Maria Clarke writes to Mary Hamilton that 'I read your letter to Mrs. Glover I knew she would be pleased to hear it she was surprised I had not told you Mrs. H was again a Mother'.[1] Letters enabled gossip to spread further, and the sharing and discussing of it was a form of entertainment in itself. Unless specifically requested otherwise, it could be expected that what you wrote in a letter would be shared, creating a form of self-censorship.

Sharing letters also created a form of entertainment outside of gossiping. As explained by Samuel Richardson: 'the Pen is almost the only Means a very modest and diffident Lady (who in Company will not attempt to glare) has to shew herself, and that she has a Mind. … her Closet her Paradise … there she can distinguish Her Self: By this means she can assert and vindicate her Claim to Sense and Meaning.'.[2] Letter writing was a semi-private mode of expressing opinions that could be used by women, and sharing letters was a form of sharing these opinions and voices. This can also be seen in the Mary Hamilton collection, and letter sharing is documented in Hamilton's diaries. In the diary covering 15 June to 22 September 1783 Hamilton describes her reading from her own manuscript volumes of prose and poetry to Mrs Delany as she sat and worked.[3] Hamilton notes that her friends also read to her from their own manuscript volumes, such as Lady Wake, who read to her on the subject of marriage and the duties of a wife. Hamilton then shared Elizabeth Carter's letter on the subject of learned women with Lady Wake.[4] Hamilton often shared and read aloud from the letters she received from friends such as Hannah More and Elizabeth Carter. This reflects the importance of letters in sharing writing that specifically belonged to women - written by women, for women, about women's experiences and shared amongst them. Sharing the letters, and reading them aloud amongst friends, was a form of entertainment, but it was also creating a political space. Letters were an outlet for the voices and writing of women, and sharing them a way of discussing and expanding ideas.

Private letters

Other letters, both real and fictional, are intended for their named recipient only, and are not to be shared. Think perhaps of Darcy's letter to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice,* a work that was originally drafted as an epistolary novel titled 'First Impressions'. It is a moment of pivotal importance in the text, with the letter at the climax of the plot, and Elizabeth 'read and re-read [the letter] with the closest attention'.[5] It is private, and she keeps the content of the letter to

[1] HAM/1/10/1/18.
[2] Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson,* ed. by John Carroll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).
[3] GB 133 HAM/2/4.
[4] GB 133 HAM/2/4.
[5] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice, (*London: Wordsworth, 2019).

herself. However, the reader is able to read the entire letter alongside her, as we are now able to read the letters from the Mary Hamilton collection. This continues to blur the line of the role of letters as public or private pieces of writing, though undoubtedly adds a further element of entertainment for the non-recipient reader, whether in fiction or not. In the collection certain points of letters are specified as private, such as this postscript in Prince George's letter: 'P.S. pray be quite secret concerning everything Private about Windsor. Adieu'.[6]

Within the collection there is reference to a number of letters that have been self-censored or destroyed. This again shows the difficulty of categorising the letter format as either public or private, as entertainment or art, or as something more secretive. It also forms a key difference between looking at a real collection of letters and those presented in literature, where lost or destroyed letters can be used as a device, as the reader may still know the letter's content. In the Mary Hamilton collection the reference to destroyed letters only adds a tantalising glimpse at gaps in the correspondence. Such as in her 1803 letter when Sarah Dickenson writes 'As, agreeable to your wishes I burnt your last letter; perhaps I shall not be very accurate in answering it; indeed the subject is so exquisitely painful, that I shall not easily be tempted again to enter upon it.'[7] The ability to destroy correspondence provides secrecy for women and men alike, providing a greater sense of freedom to express oneself, but it relies entirely on the receiver complying to the writers' wishes. It emphasises the purpose of letters in courtship as well as friendship, with George, Prince of Wales, writing as a postscript in one of his love letters to Hamilton 'P.S. According to my promise I have burnt that dear & admirable Letter which has cost me many sighs & tears. -- Adieu'.[8]

Letters as Historical Record: Female Musical Practice in the Elite Georgian Home
Tillie Quattrone

Note: Due to the spring semester's industrial action, a concussion, and an increasing pandemic-fueled concern for my family in the USA, I temporarily withdrew from the Undergraduate Scholars Programme. I have recently been able to re-visit my research plan and while I have not been able to complete the essay I originally planned, have compiled my research and drawn preliminary conclusions.

I was able to transcribe a letter and an envelope for the archive, the links to which can be found here: letter, envelope. The letter is from Wilhelmina King neé Murray and written to Mary Hamilton. The envelope is also addressed to Mary (using her husband's surname of Dickenson) with the Frank and signature of Wilhelmina's brother-in-law James Murray, who is her husband George's brother. James is a Member of Parliament and therefore gets free postage. In her letter, Wilhelmina writes of her mother's poor health and a ball she attended held by the Duke of Leeds, detailing the poor dancing skills of the guests and the card games they played after the

[6] GEO/ADD/3/82/11.
[7] HAM/1/3/2/9.
[8] GEO/ADD/3/82/5.

Duke's exit. She writes of her visit to Lord Sackville's family burial ground and apologises for making Mary pay for the letter's delivery.

My preliminary research of the Hamilton archive (in both LUNA and the Jisc Archives Hub) elicited a number of moments that could have offered insight into my exploration of female musical practices in the home. The following list details the pieces with both direct quotes and paraphrased material, as well as my thoughts on what the piece could have contributed to my research.

- HAM/1/10/1/24, letter from Anna Maria Clarke to John Dickenson
    - 'I hope you pursue your musical studies nothing can be more delightful I wish I could hear you on your Baſs an Instrument I much admire'
    - My thoughts: to what instrument does the author refer when she writes 'Baſs'? Is this an upright bass perhaps?
    - 'Harpsichord teachers commonly taught thorough bass' (Leppert, 56 (see source below))
        - Perhaps this quote refers to the type of notation she was learning? Thoroughbass is the same as figured bass, which is a type of musical notation used in harpsichord sheet music.
- HAM/1/4/3/5, letter from Jane Holman neé Hamilton (MH's cousin) to Mary Hamilton
    - 'I go on practising Music as much as ever -- I hope I have made some improvement this last Summer; you tell me it is thought so -- Are Miſs Dickenson's musical? Mr: Dickenson is I remember, very fond of Music.'
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive.
- HAM/1/4/3/12, letter from Jane Hamilton (MH's cousin) to Mary Hamilton
    - Paraphrase: Jane says her music is coming along well
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive.
- HAM/2/3
    - Paraphrase: Mrs. Walsingham (the host of a visit MH made to Mrs. W and her daughter) played an Egan harpsichord
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive.
- HAM/1/10/1/24, letter from Anna Maria Clarke to John Dickenson
    - 'At home and much occupied by music'
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive.
- HAM/1/17/154, letter from Lady Catherine Herries to Mary Hamilton
    - Paraphrase: This letter arranges accommodation for Lady Herries and her family and servants for an upcoming visit to Buxton which John Dickenson has offered to secure ahead of time. Among other things, Herries specifies the inclusion of a piano forte for her husband's daughter Nina, because she should not 'lose her music' (quoted from Jisc archive).

    - Paraphrase: acquisition of a piano forte is also mentioned by Herries in HAM/1/17/35
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive.
- HAM/1/4/3/1, letter from Jane Holman neé Hamilton (MH's cousin) to Mary Hamilton
    - Paraphrase: Jane takes her music book and harpsichord to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Glover, where she is a guest one evening. She plays and sings for the people attending.
    - My thoughts: recurring theme of skilled musicianship making women worthy, accomplished, and attractive. Music performance is a form of entertainment at private gatherings other than those held at one's own home.
- HAM/1/4/3/13, letter from Jane Holman neé Hamilton (MH's cousin) to Mary Hamilton
    - 'We have not yet had a Concert -- only small musical Parties en famille -- You ask me about Miſs Mathew --she no longer aſsists me by singing -- She had the good Taste to despise Mr: Marchesi's Style, and behaved with so little Politeneſs to me the first Season of my learning of him, that our Intercourse ceased. We have another great Singer here now -- Sigr: Pacchierotti --I dare say Mr: Dickenson has mention'd him to you -- he is, besides, a most amiable, and very clever, Man.'
    - My thoughts: Does Jane play some accompanying instrument? It also seems that certain instructors (male) were deemed unworthy for the women who learn. This indicates that the skill of singing was taken very seriously.
    - 'Madame Mara is to be the first Woman in the serious Opera. The little Theatre in the Hay-Market is made as commodious as it can be -- it is not spacious enough to be sure -- but certainly it is better to have the Opera there, than to have none.'
    - My thoughts: females perform in public operas
- HAM/1/2/29, letter from John Dickenson to wife Mary neé Hamilton
    - Dickenson saw party guests (at least one male and one female) perform a duet which he claimed 'far exceeded anything I have heard before'.
    - My thoughts: men and women sing together in the home

In addition to the letters, my research brought me to a 1988 book by Richard D. Leppert entitled *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-cultural Formation in Eighteenth-century England*. I have listed a few pertinent chapters and included some choice quotes and paraphrasing:

- Chapter 3: Music, sexism and female domesticity
    - Playing music produces cheerfulness, which charms men (28)
    - Playing music keeps women from being idle, which is to be avoided at all costs (28)
    - Young women learn the harpsichord (28)

    - ‘...in the eyes of men music accordingly contributed to social stability by keeping women in the place that men had assigned them’ (29).
    - ‘...the culture demanded music as an appropriate mark of both femininity itself and female class status’ (29).
    - ‘There is no question that musical skills were valued as one of the domestic talents a man sought in a wife’ (38).
    - ‘...music’s pleasure accrued from its compensatory potential as a balm to isolation (39).
    - ‘[A woman] became visually prominent, especially if she performed outside the drawing room, particularly if she gave a public recital, thus upstaging her husband and, implicitly, suggesting to her husband’s friends that she was out of control...’ (40).
    - By teaching only women music, they were limited in their access to the same knowledge and power available to men (43).
- Chapter 4: Music education as social praxis
    - The ‘...violin, violoncello, guitar, german-flute’ (56) were all learned by women.
    - Instructors should be respectable and polite: they must be men who are ‘...well qualified to sing and play...who can teach with good temper and genteel behaviour’ (58).
        - ‘...he had to be of good temper and gentility, lack vulgarity, exercise no physical constraint...and exhibit softness of voice. The ideal music master, in other words, should be a male-gender version of girls’ mothers, not substitute fathers’ (59).
        - There must be no chance of inspiration of revolt or predatory behaviour on the part of the instructor (63).
- Chapter 7: The female at music: praxis, representation and the problematic of identity
    - ‘...girls and women were for the most part restricted to two types of instruments, keyboards and plucked strings’ (147).
    - ‘..spinets, harpsichords and pianos were sufficiently expensive to be well outside the reach of the lower orders’ (154).

My preliminary conclusions are as follows:
In the Georgian era, the private home offered a location where middle class and well-off women established and improved their marketable skills as wives, one of which was musicianship. Music was also seen as a way for women of these classes to combat boredom and idle minds, which were considered damaging. They played keyed instruments (piano fortes, spinets), strings (lutes, English guitar), and sang. The keyboards were often played by girls and women from wealthier families while the stringed instruments were cheaper and therefore more accessible to those of lesser means. Music instructors were hired with care, ensuring their demeanors were placating so as to guarantee that they would not prey upon the young impressionable females or inspire them to revolt against their fathers. Female musicians from

more aristocratic families were rarely encouraged or allowed to perform publicly as this practice drew attention away from their husbands and connoted an untamable wife, indicating that the limited degree to which wealthier women were taught music was an attempt to prevent them from becoming too accomplished (and subsequently out of control and/or promiscuous). However, as evidenced by Jane Holman neé Hamilton in HAM/1/4/3/13, women did perform publicly, many of whom held high social status (especially in areas like opera as opposed to theatre, which was seen as more sexually deviant) and were respected for their skills. In summation, the gendered practice of music in the upper classes of the Georgian era served to define and reinforce women's subordinate societal position, occupying time that could otherwise have been spent in exploration of corruptive activities, whether those be revolt, education, or pre-marital romance or sexuality.

Note: Many thanks to postdoctoral researcher Cassie Ulph for her suggestions and feedback.

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Overview

Our joint research project furthered our own understanding of Georgian letter practices and the processes of transcription. Whilst conducting individual research on the position of letters as a historical record we found that expectations of social convention could be found across the letters, particularly in relation to the position of women. Convention and etiquette shaped letter writing and letter writing practices, and the letters themselves reveal the importance of social practices in politics, music and literature. Social convention was also useful for our own experiences with transcription, as it was through comparing letters and cross referencing phrases that we were able to decipher handwriting and grasp meanings within the letters. Without common practices and letter convention, this process would have been more difficult. It would also have been difficult without the digital collection, as online search features and easy access to letters written by the same author made this cross-referencing process possible. It is through the Image-to-Text Project that these letters are able to be better understood as a collection of work, with not only information but cultural practices and habits able to be easily compared. It was a pleasure to be able to contribute to this project.